BULLY AND HERO, TOO!

(Read the splendid, long, complete School Tale of the juniors of St. Jim's in this number.)

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Grand Long Complete Tale

A Tale of the Terrible Three.

by MARTIN Clifford.

LUMLEY-LUMLEY'S HEROIC ACTION.

(See inside.)

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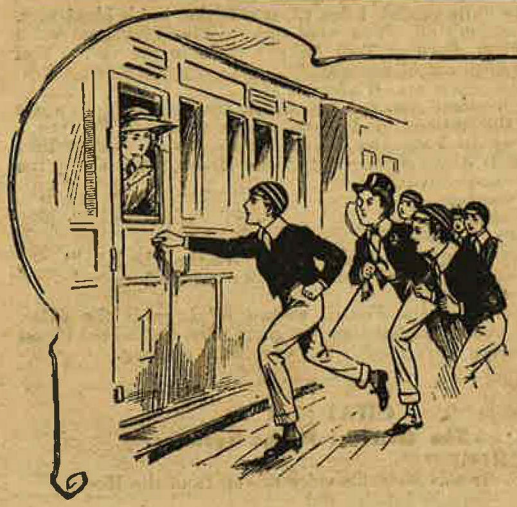

LUMLEY-LUMLEY, — HERO! —

A Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.
Waiting for Gussy.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY, the fellow who was known to St. Jim's as the "Outsider," stood at the window of his study in the School House.

Lumley-Lumley was alone in the study. He stood looking out of the window into the green quadrangle. He had a view of most of the front of the School House, and down below he could see a group of juniors chatting cheerily on the House steps. The sound of their voices reached him through the open window, and he distinguished words every now and then.

There was a hard look on Lumley-Lumley's face, and his lips were tight set. A feeling of loneliness weighed upon him. He might have had friends at St. Jim's—plenty of them, and it was his own fault if he had none, and the only fellow he was ever chummy with was Mellish, the cad of the Fourth. As a rule, Jerrold was quite satisfied with his way of life. But as he looked out of his study window at that cheery group of juniors, it struck him that perhaps he was not quite so clever as he had always believed, and that perhaps his way was not the best way.

He could see Jack Blake and Digby, of the Fourth, and Herries was in the shadow of the doorway. They were waiting for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to come out. They frequently had to wait for D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's had a way of wanting to change his necktie at the last moment, or to put on another waistcoat, and his chums were often reduced to a state of fury by it. But they were good-tempered enough now. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and a fine, pleasant afternoon, and a fellow would have had to be very grumpy indeed to fail to be cheerful.

"When is that ass coming?" Lumley heard Blake say. "We shall be late."

Digby looked at his watch.

"Oh, no, that's all right! Plenty of time for the train."

"Well, we ought to be there early, you know. Figgins & Co. are bound to be early."

"Yes, rather! Gussy, Gussy!"

"D'Arcy! Gussy! Ass! Fathead! Buck up!"

Three youths belonging to the Shell came out of the School House. They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three.

"Hallo! Going out?" said Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

"Whither bound?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Same as you, I expect."

"Rylcombe Station?"

"Yes!"

"Oh, rats! I don't see what you want to go for? Look here——"

"Rats!"

And the Terrible Three walked off cheerfully. Blake grunted.

"Where is that blessed duffer, Gussy?" he exclaimed. "Those Shell bounders will be there, and Figgins & Co. will be there, and we shall be late!"

"Rotten!"

"Buzz off and see where he is, Dig."

"Right you are!"

Digby disappeared into the House. Blake and Herries remained on the School House steps, drumming their heels with impatience.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley watched them, a curious expression on his face. He did not know what was the cause of the excitement among the juniors. There was evidently something "on." Lumley wondered what it was, and a new thought came into his mind. He turned from the window, left the study, and walked quickly down the Fourth-Form passage towards the stairs.

As he passed Study No. 6 he heard the sound of two voices

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raised in altercation. They belonged to Digby and to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Buck up, you image!" Digby was saying, in excited tones.

"Weally, Dig——"

"Tom Merry and Lowther and Manners are gone!"

"Yaas, but——"

"Figgins & Co. will have started before now."

"Vewy pwob., but——"

"We shall be last."

"Yaas, I know. But——"

"Well, come on, then!"

"I am sowwy, Dig., but it is uttahly imposs. for me to come out in a soiled collah, and I only discovahed at the last moment that it was soiled!!"

"You ass——"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Will you buck up?" yelled Digby.

"How can I buck up when I have to keep on leavin' off to answah you?"

"You—you—you——"

Lumley-Lumley grinned as he passed on. He went downstairs and heard no more. Blake and Herries looked round quickly as he came out of the door, and then looked disappointed. They had fancied for the moment that it was D'Arcy.

Blake whistled, and Herries drummed with his heels. They did not expect the Outsider to stop and speak. They were on the worst of terms with the millionaire's son. But Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was on a new tack that afternoon. He stopped.

"Nice afternoon!" he remarked.

"Oh, ripping!" remarked Herries.

"Going out?"

"Yes."

"To Rylcombe?"

"Yes."

Blake's answers were monosyllabic. He did not say "Yes—coming?" as he might have said to anybody else. He did not want the company of the Outsider—the fellow who had made himself bitterly unpopular at St. Jim's by unscrupulousness and falsehood, and who had narrowly escaped being expelled for breaking bounds at night and visiting public-houses.

Lumley-Lumley flushed a little.

Hardened though he was in many ways, he was sensitive enough in others; but in pursuance of his secret determination, he affected not to notice Blake's short answers.

"Anything on in Rylcombe?" he asked.

"Not that I know of."

"But you're going there?"

"Yes."

"To meet somebody, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"At the station?"

"Yes."

The conversation had become a catechism. Blake cast an impatient glance into the House. D'Arcy and Digby had not appeared yet.

"New chap coming to the school?" asked Lumley-Lumley, who seemed resolved to keep up the conversation at any cost.

"No."

"Oh, friend of yours coming, I suppose?"

"That's it."

"Just a visitor?"

"Yes."

Blake whistled again. He did not say who the visitor was. He did not regard that as being any business of Lumley-Lumley's.

The Outsider tightened his lips for a moment.

"Lot of fellows going with you?" he remarked.

"Only three."

"Tom Merry has gone?"

"Yes."

"Same place?"

"Yes."

"And the New House fellows—Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—Figgins & Co., as you you call them—they've gone?"

"I believe so."

"Rather a distinguished visitor, I suppose?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes."

"Anybody I know?"

"You've seen her."

Lumley-Lumley started.

"Her! Is it a girl?"

"Yes," said Blake reluctantly.

The Outsider burst into a laugh.

"Oh, that's what you're so secret about, is it? You're going to meet a girl, and——"

Blake's brow darkened.

"We're going to meet Miss Cleveland, D'Arcy's cousin," he said sharply. "It's known to everybody who cares to know. There's nothing secret about it."

"Cousin Ethel—eh?"

"Yes."

"She is paying a visit to St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I see!"

Jerrold understood at last. He knew how popular D'Arcy's Cousin Ethel was with the chums of St. Jim's, and how they were willing to walk miles to win a smile from her. He remembered his own last meeting with Cousin Ethel, and coloured a little.

"Look here," said Jerrold abruptly, "I'd like to come with you, Blake!"

"What?"

"I'd like to come with you, to meet Miss Cleveland's train," said the Outsider.

"I'm sorry for that."

"Why?"

"Because you can't come."

The Outsider scowled darkly.

"You don't want my company—eh?"

"To be quite candid, I don't," said Blake, in his blunt way. "But that isn't all. You were rude to Miss Cleveland when you met her down at Tom Merry's place in the vac. You ought to keep out of her way."

"I shall please myself about that."

"You'll please me, too, as far as that goes. You won't come to the station," said Blake, with a sparkle in his eyes.

"Sowwy to keep you waitin', deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, coming out of the House, followed by the red and exasperated Digby.

Blake snorted.

"You slow ass——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Oh, come on, now you're here! We shall be late!"

"It was weally Dig's fault—he interwupted me——"

"Oh, come on!"

The chums of the Fourth walked off towards the gates. Jerrold Lumley was left standing alone upon the School House steps, looking after them. His eyes were glinting.

CHAPTER 2.

The Outsider Means Business.

"LUMLEY!"

It was Mellish's voice calling from the House.

Jerrold Lumley did not stir.

He heard Mellish, but he was not accustomed to wasting much politeness upon his toady. Mellish could call as long as he wished.

"Lumley!"

The Outsider sat down on the stone balustrade, his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets.

His face was hard, his eyes glinting.

He remembered Cousin Ethel well. He had been rude to her once, and he remembered that well, too, and the cold scorn of the girl, which brought the hot blood to his cheeks as he thought of it.

Yet he liked her.

He did not quite know why or how, but Ethel had made a deep impression upon him, and he wished that he had been more like Tom Merry or Blake or Figgins, so that he might have been on terms of friendship with her.

But was it impossible now?

Lumley-Lumley was, as he often said himself, "hard all through." His early life in New York had hardened him—the battle of life, the struggle with grim poverty, before the millions came to Lumleys, Limited.

He had seldom wanted a thing without getting it, by hook or by crook, and he never scrupled much as to the methods he used.

If only——

"Lumley!"

Mellish's voice interrupted his reflections, as the cad of the Fourth Form came out of the School House.

Mellish looked angry.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed. "Didn't you hear me calling?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you answer?"

"I guess I didn't want to."

Mellish bit his lip.

"We arranged to go out," he said. "I looked in the study for you, and you weren't there. Are you ready?"

"I'm not going."

Mellish stared.

"Not going?" he exclaimed.

Jerrold shook his head.

"No."

"But—we arranged it——"

"Then we can disarrange it."

Mellish looked at Lumley-Lumley, and then burst out. Even the worm will turn, and Mellish had been "fed up" lately with Jerrold's insolence. They had planned that afternoon to go down the river and visit a certain inn, where bookmakers were to be met, and where they were to have what Jerrold described as a high old time. Mellish, who was as lawless as he dared to be, had looked forward to the excursion with great keenness. To be told in this offhand way that it was off was a little too much, even for the fellow who had always toadied to the millionaire's son.

"You—you confounded purse-proud puppy!" Mellish burst out. "I've had about enough of your cheek. You're not going! It's too late for me to fix up anything else—everybody's gone out. Do you think I'm going to spend the afternoon watching the Sixth practise footer? You rotter!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I've had a little too much of you and your blessed side!" said Mellish. "You can look out for another chum, that's all! You can't play the giddy Tsar over me because your father made millions by canning rotten beef in Chicago!"

"Don't be an ass, Mellish," said Lumley quietly. "I can't go down the river this afternoon; I've changed my mind, and I've got something else on. Did you know that Cousin Ethel was coming to the school this afternoon?"

"Yes, I heard some chap say so."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

Mellish stared.

"I didn't think you cared about it, Lumley. Why should I?"

"Well, I do care about it."

"My hat!"

Mellish sat down on the balustrade and stared at the Outsider. His astonishment seemed too great for words.

Lumley looked at him savagely.

"Well, what are you cackling at?"

"My hat!"

"You confounded ass——"

"My only aunt!" gasped Mellish. "I never thought of you. You—my hat! You don't mean to say that you're following in Figgins's footsteps, and going spoons! My word—you!"

Lumley coloured.

"Do you want me to knock you off that balustrade?" he asked, in a low, furious tone.

Mellish shrank a little.

"Oh, keep your wool on!" he said.

"Then stop that rotting!"

"But you said——"

"I'm not a soft fool!" said Lumley-Lumley. "There's nothing of that sort about me. I'll explain. You know that the fellows here think a great deal of Cousin Ethel."

"Yes, I know that."

"They seem to look upon her as a piece of precious porcelain, or something of that sort, which will break if it's touched roughly," said Jerrold, with a sneer.

Mellish chuckled.

"Yes, something like that."

"And they're all determined on one thing—that I sha'n't have anything to say to her," the Outsider went on.

Mellish nodded.

"Well, that's where I come in. Tom Merry and Blake and Figgins don't agree on many things, but they're all agreed on one point—to keep me away from Cousin Ethel."

"I know."

"I'm going to stop that."

"You can't. They won't take you on."

"I've tried that," said Lumley. "I asked Blake to let me join his party to meet her at the station."

"He refused, of course?"

"Yes."

"You'll have to make up your mind to that, Lumley. Cousin Ethel isn't your sort. She won't have anything to say to me, either. Look here, drop the idea, and come where we arranged."

"I don't usually give up a scheme," said Lumley. "I'm rich enough, and I have brains enough, to have my own way. I don't care a rap for Cousin Ethel in any way—but I do care for being barred and excluded by those cads!"

"I don't see how you can alter it."

"I'm going to."

Mellish looked interested.

"But how?" he asked. "I'm ready to help you in anything up against Tom Merry & Co., but you see, it's impossible. Cousin Ethel herself won't have anything to do with you. She'll stick to them. You could dazzle some girls with your money, but not Ethel Cleveland. She wouldn't care!"

"I'll make her care."

"What?"

"I'm going to score over those cads!" said Lumley-Lumley between his teeth. "They've planned an afternoon with Cousin Ethel, and they're tumbling over one another to be first to meet her—and they're leaving me out."

"Yes——"

"Well, I'm going to score. Cousin Ethel is going to spend this afternoon with me instead of with them."

Mellish gasped.

"But she won't!" he almost shrieked.

"She'll have to."

"What!"

"I'm on the warpath now. What's the good of being a millionaire's son if I can't have my own way. I could afford to spend a hundred pounds on spoofing them, if I liked. I'm going to spoof them."

"But——" Mellish gasped helplessly.

"And you're going to help me."

"But——"

"So come on!"

And Lumley-Lumley linked his arm in Mellish's, and walked him away. Mellish went unresistingly. He was completely under the influence of the hard, cunning Outsider.

"But have you got a plan?" he gasped, at last.

And Lumley nodded with a grin.

"I guess so," he replied.

And Mellish said no more.

— —

CHAPTER 3.

The Outsider Plays a Deep Game.

JACK BLAKE looked at his watch as the chums of the Fourth strode from the gates of St. Jim's. Jack Blake was frowning heavily.

"Quarter to three!" he growled. "We shall be late."

"Oh, we can do it in ten minutes!" Digby remarked.

"Let's hurry!" Herries suggested.

"Weally, Hewwies, the weathah is too warm for huwwyin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I do not feel quite up to huwwyin'. We should have been in time but for you fellows."

"What!" yelled all three.

"Yaas, wathah! You would persist in intewwuptin' me when I was changin' my collah."

Blake looked daggers.

"Look here, Gussy!" he said. "You're too funny to live. Why they didn't drown you at birth, and keep one of the others, I never could make out!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Get a move on now. Buck up!"

"I am weally walkin' vewy fast——"

"Walk faster!"

"Imposs., deah boy! It does not look gwaceful to walk too fast."

"You ass! Cousin Ethel will be at Rylcombe Station at three."

"We shall be in time, deah boy. Besides, more haste less speed, you know. I assuah you it will be all wight."

"Ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Buck up!"

"Wats!"

When Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was obstinate there was no moving him. He had made up his mind that there would be plenty of time to arrive at the station by three, even if he progressed at a leisurely and graceful walk. From that no argument could move him, and Blake knew it.

"Come on, you fellows," said Jack. "We'll leave him behind."

"Right-ho!"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass indignantly upon Blake.

"I wefuse to be left behind, you boundahs!"

"Then buck up!"

"I decline to buck up."

The three juniors laughed, and pressed on at a hot pace, as if they were on a walking match. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked after them wrathfully. He had said he wouldn't buck up; and what he had said, he had said. He had also said that he wouldn't be left behind, but about that he did not seem to be able to help himself now.

"Weally, you fellows——" he called out.

"Good-bye!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby tramped on rapidly, and a bend of the lane hid them from view. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sniffed with indignation, and strolled on. He simply would not hurry. It was certain that he would be the last to reach the station, but that did not make any difference to him now. His mind was made up.

"Hallo, D'Arcy!"

The swell of St. Jim's started as a voice hailed him from behind.

Jerrold Lumley and Mellish were behind him, and had almost overtaken him. D'Arcy looked at them coldly enough. He liked Lumley-Lumley no more than Blake did, and only a few days before they had met in fistic encounter—of which Lumley's face still bore some traces.

"Hallo!" said D'Arcy.

"Going to the station to meet Miss Cleveland—eh?"

"Yaas, wathah, though I weally do not know how you know anythin' about it!"

"You'll be late."

"I have plentay of time."

"Where are the others?"

"Gone on!"

"Oh, I see!" said Lumley, walking beside D'Arcy, and assuming a most cordial manner; and the Outsider of St. Jim's could be cordial enough when he chose. "I say, D'Arcy, it's warm weather for walking!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wefused to huwwy!"

"Quite right. But would you like a lift?"

"A lift!"

"Yes. I'm having the trap out from the Golden Pig—we shall pass it in a few minutes, and the trap will be ready. I'll give you a lift into the village, if you like."

"Weally, Lumley——"

"Oh, don't refuse!" said Jerrold. "You're making your trousers dusty on the road, and it's warm for walking. Besides, you've none too much time to get to the station."

"Weally——"

"Here's the place," said Lumley, stopping outside the wayside inn, and signing to Mellish to go in and call for the trap. "It's a jolly little trap, and a ripping horse. You can drive if you like. I often have the trap out."

"Yaas, I have seen you in it. The horse is wathah skittish. It would be safah for me to dwive, I think."

"Certainly!" said Jerrold readily, seeing that D'Arcy was yielding to the temptation. "Look here, I'd take it as a real favour if you'd drive for me."

"Well, if you put it in that way, deah boy——"

"I do."

"Then I accept with pleasure."

"Right-ho! Here's the trap!"

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was well known at the inn. He came there sometimes for other reasons than for ponies and traps; sometimes when the gates were locked at St. Jim's, and the lights out in the junior dormitories. Jerrold and Mellish had intended to use the Golden Pig trap for their run down the river that afternoon, and all was in readiness for them. Mellish drove it out of the inn yard. The horse was certainly good, very different from the "crock" that was usually let out in Rylcombe with a hired trap, for Lumley knew a great deal about horseflesh, and he could afford to have what he wanted.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyes sparkled at the sight of it.

"Jollay good!" he remarked. "Bai Jove! It will be wathah funnay to pass Blake and Hewwies and Dig on the woad aftah all!"

"They wouldn't wait for you?" asked Lumley.

"Well, not exactly that; they wanted me to huwwy, and I wefused."

"We'll pass them right enough."

D'Arcy got into the trap and gathered up the reins. Mellish exchanged a quick look with his comrade.

"What's the game?" he murmured.

"Get in, that's all," said Jerrold.

"You've got a scheme on?"

"I guess so."

D'Arcy looked round.

"Jump in, deah boys!"

His manner was quite cordial now. As a matter of fact, D'Arcy was so good-natured that anybody could have imposed upon him by a show of cordiality. Jerrold was so civil now that D'Arcy was feeling a little sorry he had been so rough on the Outsider, and that was exactly what the young schemer wanted.

Circumstances were playing into the Outsider's hands. D'Arcy would have been startled if he had known what was in Jerrold's mind.

But he did not think of anything of the sort for a moment. He simply thought that Jerrold wanted to be obliging. That was all.

"Bai Jove! This is a decent horse," he remarked, as the trap rolled on down the road to Rylcombe.

"I guess so," said Jerrold. "I know a good thing when I see it. They know I mean to get what I want, too."

"Bai Jove! There's Blake!"

The trap was covering the ground so quickly, that Blake and his chums came in sight in a very few minutes. The three juniors looked up at the sound of wheels, and they stared at the sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the trap with Lumley and Mellish.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Blake.

D'Arcy grinned down at them.

"I wathah think I shall be at the station, first, deah boys!"

"You ass——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"What are you chumming up with Lumley for?"

"He has been vewy decent, and I wefuse——"

"Get down!"

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"Pewwaps I'd bettah give you a lift!" said D'Arcy slackening.

"I'm not going to drive with that blessed Outsider!" said Blake.

"The Outsider would have something to say about that, too!" said Jerrold, with a sneer. "There's not room for three more in the trap, either!"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"Look here, Gussy, get down! You don't want to take favours from that chap!" exclaimed Blake hotly. "He only wants to scrape acquaintance with Cousin Ethel."

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy looked perplexed.

"Better get on," said Jerrold. "Never mind Blake!"

"Weally, Lumley——"

"Get down, Gussy!"

"Weally Blake——"

D'Arcy was in a dubious frame of mind. He felt that Blake was right to some extent, yet having accepted the lift from Lumley, he could hardly throw it in the Outsider's face. And yet——

Lumley settled the matter.

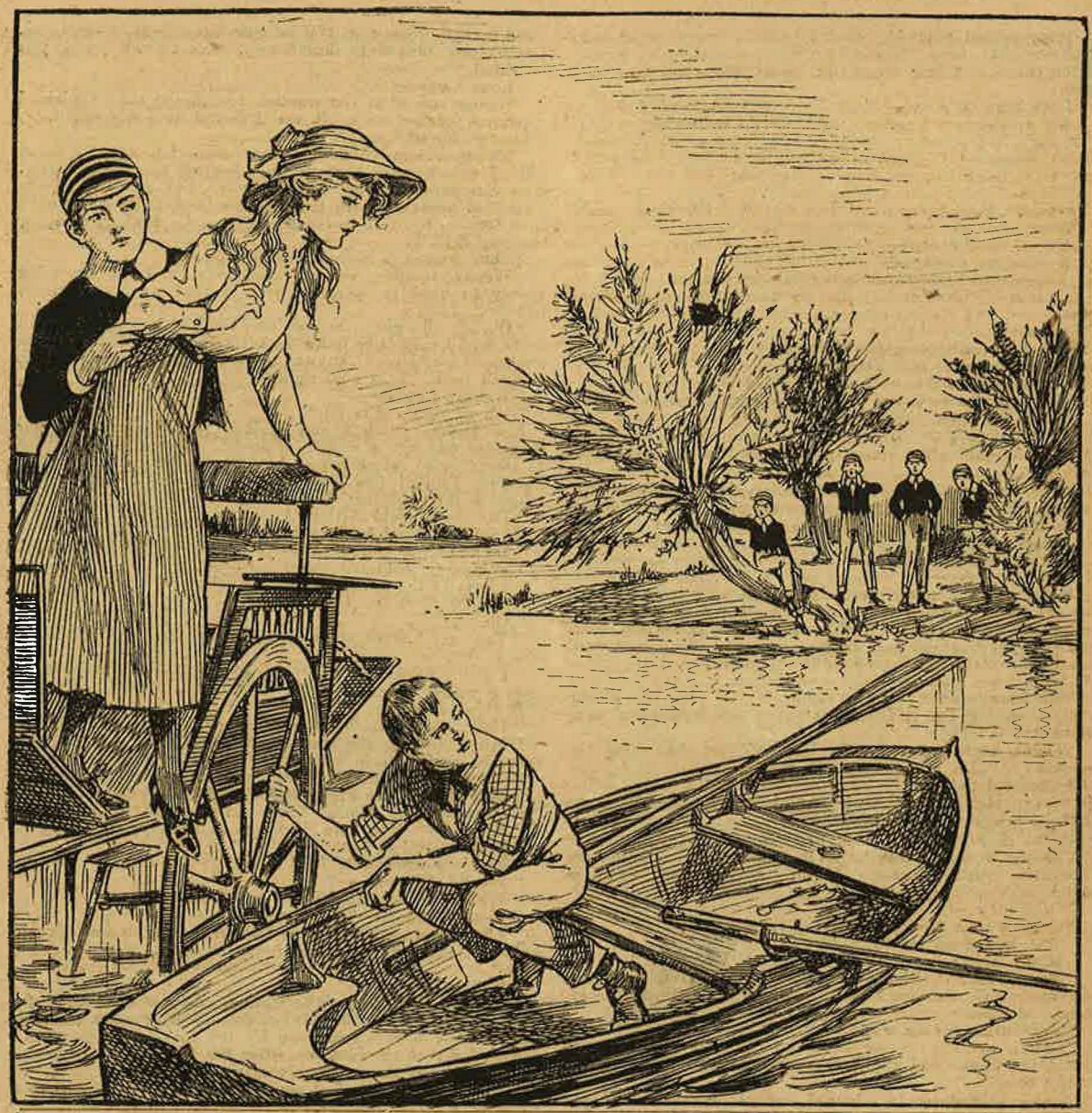
He gave the horse a flick with the whip, and the animal bounded forward. The chums of the Fourth had to spring back out of the way, or they would certainly have been knocked down in the road.

"You rotter!" roared Blake.

The trap rushed on.

D'Arcy gripped the reins. The horse was fresh, and it needed all the care of a skilful driver to keep him from bolting. D'Arcy had no time to think of anything but driving for the next few minutes; and by that time Blake and his comrades were left far behind.

Rylcombe village was now before the trap, and just where the lane ran into the old-fashioned High Street, the occupants of the trap caught sight of the Terrible Three. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther looked at the trap as it came by, and uttered a simultaneous exclamation.



Cousin Ethel hesitated when Lumley-Lumley suggested she should take to the boat. "Very well," she said at last, "I will go with you." (See page 14.)

CHAPTER 4.
Meeting the Train.

"GUSSY!"

Arthur Augustus had just succeeded in getting the horse to slacken. He turned a face somewhat pink with exertion upon the chums of the Shell.

"Hallo, deah boys!" he remarked. "What are you doin' heah?"

"Going to the station."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"We're going to meet Cousin Ethel!" exclaimed Monty Lowther blandly.

"Weally Lowthah——"

"I thought you were going, too!" said Manners.

"So I am, deah boy!" replied D'Arcy. "The twain is not till thwee, and there are seven minutes yet. Heaps of time."

"You're going to the station now?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I should hardly think you were taking Lumley to meet Cousin Ethel!" said Tom Merry bluntly.

Arthur Augustus looked worried.

He was beginning to realise that the Outsider, with his usual keen cunning, had taken some advantage of his thoughtless good nature, but it was a little too late now to recede from the position he had been tricked into.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

The Terrible Three looked grimly at D'Arcy. How he came to be driving with the Outsider they did not know; but their faces expressed pretty clearly what they thought about it.

"You see——" began D'Arcy lamely.

"Oh, get down!"

"You see——"

"D'Arcy has accepted a lift from me," said Lumley, with an unpleasant look. "I suppose he is his own master, Tom Merry, and not under your orders."

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked steadily at the Outsider.

"After your caddishness to Cousin Ethel, I think you know that she doesn't want to speak to you," he said. "D'Arcy ought to know it, too."

"Bai Jove! I never thought of that."

"Get out of that fellow's trap, then."

"Yaas, but——"

"I've apologised to Cousin Ethel, and I never meant any offence, anyway," said Lumley, his teeth setting hard.

D'Arcy looked relieved.

"Yaas, deah boys! There's no doubt that Lumley was a wotten cad, but a fellow can't do more than apologise, you know."

"Look here, D'Arcy——"

"Havin' accepted Lumley's kind offah, I can hardly thwow it at him, Tom Mewwy; even if I were so inclined," said Arthur Augustus. "Undah the circs., as Lumley is behavin' decently, I think I ought to encouwage him."

"Thanks!" said Lumley sarcastically.

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"Gussy, you ass——"

"Gussy, you fathead——"

"Gussy, you chump——"

"I decline to listen to these oppwobwious expwessions."

And D'Arcy drove on, leaving the Terrible Three standing in the road and staring after the trap. The vehicle bowled along merrily, and vanished behind a building at one of the tortuous turns of the old High Street.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry.

"I wonder what the cad's game is?" said Manners.

"He's soaped over Gussy! But there's one comfort—Cousin Ethel will jolly soon put him in his place."

And, satisfied with that assurance, the chums of the Shell strolled on towards the station. The trap was well ahead of them.

D'Arcy was a little troubled in his mind about the Outsider's meeting Cousin Ethel. Lumley had certainly spoken rudely to the girl on one occasion, and rudeness to a member of the gentle sex was a thing D'Arcy could pardon less than anything else. But then he had apologised, and now he seemed to want to act decently. At the same time, Arthur Augustus did not intend to let them meet. Accepting a lift to the station was one thing, and bringing about a meeting between Lumley and Ethel was another. It dawned upon D'Arcy that that was what the Outsider had wanted all along. He had agreed to nothing of the sort, and he did not intend to.

"Well, there's the station," said Mellish.

The railway-station was in sight. It still wanted several minutes to the hour. D'Arcy brought the trap to a stop before the building.

"Thanks awfully for the lift, Lumley!" he said, dropping the reins.

He jumped out.

The Outsider alighted, too. Mellish remained in the trap. He was wondering what Lumley's scheme was, but he was ready to back him up. That was what he was there for; but Mellish devoutly hoped that it would not mean a hostile encounter with Tom Merry & Co. If that came to pass, Mellish was much more likely to use his heels than his fists.

"Hold on a minute, D'Arcy!" said Lumley, as the swell of St. Jim's turned towards the station entrance.

"Certainly, deah boy!"

"Miss Cleveland is going to the school, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah! She is goin' to visit Mrs. Holmes, you see, and aftah that she's goin' to have tea with us," said Arthur Augustus.

"Very well. You'll want something to give her a lift to the school."

"I was thinkin' of the hack, unless Cousin Ethel would pwefer to walk."

Lumley sniffed, as he glanced towards the sorry-looking vehicle, and sorrier-looking horse, that stood outside the station. The still sorrier-looking driver was half asleep on a bench near at hand.

"Better take my trap," he said.

"Bai Jove! I should like to, but——"

"You're welcome to it, I guess!"

"Yaas, thanks awf'ly, but——"

"But what?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"Well, go on," said Jerrold grimly.

"Well, as a mattah of fact, deah boy, you place me in a deucid awkward posish.," said the swell of St. Jim's, with a troubled look. "You see, I can't take you to meet Cousin Ethel. It was vewy kind of you to give me a lift to the station, but——"

"But you don't want me to meet your cousin?"

"I am sowwy to say so."

"Oh, say it out!"

"Well, you are wight. I don't want you to meet my cousin."

"Why not?" demanded Jerrold.

D'Arcy shifted uneasily. He felt horribly uncomfortable at having to talk like this to a fellow he had just accepted a favour from, and he felt keenly that Jerrold must be the rankest of rank outsiders to place him in such a position.

"Well, you see, you were a wottah once, and——"

"But I apologised."

"Yaas, that's all vewy well; but, you see, I—well, I don't mind speakin' to you, as you were decent enough to apologise. I think you want to be decent now. But I can't spwing you on Ethel, you know."

"Look here——"

"If that was what you wanted, you should have explained when you offahed me a lift, and I should have wefused it."

Lumley forced a laugh.

"My dear chap, you're making a mountain out of a molehill. I didn't come here to force myself upon your party. You can have the trap to St. Jim's. I've got business to attend to here that will take me an hour or more. That's time for you to drive to the school, and for Mellish to bring the trap back."

Arthur Augustus looked greatly relieved.

"Weally, Lumley, you are vewy good, and I'm howwibly sowwy to have to speak to you in that way, you know, but——"

"Oh, it's all right! Nobody's as black as he's painted, you know, and I mayn't be quite the black sheep you fellows think me," said Lumley. "Anyway, take the trap, and let Mellish bring it back. That's all right."

"Weally, Lumley——"

"It's all right. I'm off!"

And Lumley, with a nod, walked rapidly away. Arthur Augustus was left in a state of doubt. He had not had time to accept or to refuse before Lumley left him, and in a few moments Lumley had disappeared down one of the narrow streets leading towards the river.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

He looked round doubtfully.

"Do you know where Lumley has gone, Mellish?" he asked.

The cad of the Fourth shook his head.

"I haven't the faintest idea," he said.

"Couldn't you find him?"

"Oh, no!"

"You see, I don't know about havin' the twap. I should like to, but——"

"I don't think you can very well refuse Lumley. What does it matter, anyway?"

D'Arcy hesitated.

"Hallo, there's the train coming in!" exclaimed Mellish.

D'Arcy ran into the station. He didn't want to risk not being on the platform when Cousin Ethel arrived.

Three fellows in St. Jim's caps were waiting on the platform already. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, of the New House at St. Jim's. They had been first in the field.

"Bai Jove! You here!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

Figgins stared at him.

"Fancy meeting you!" he said.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"What are you doing here?" asked Kerr.

"Weally, Kerr——"

"I hope you haven't bothered about coming to meet Cousin Ethel," said Fatty Wynn, with his fat smile. "We're doing that."

"Weally, Wynn——"

The train rattled into the station. At the same time the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. came bolting upon the platform. They were all in time for the train. Ten St. Jim's juniors were on the platform when the train stopped, looking out eagerly for Cousin Ethel's carriage.

It was Figgins who first caught sight of a sweet face at a carriage window, and in a twinkling he had rushed up and dragged the door open.

CHAPTER 5.

Black Treachery.

"COUSIN ETHEL!"

Cousin Ethel stepped from the carriage with a smile. She seemed amused at finding so many boys waiting for her at the station. Certainly she was not likely to come to any harm in the short walk from the village to St. Jim's, with so many devoted protectors to take care of her.

"I am so pleased to see you all," she said. "How kind of you to come and meet me like this!"

"Not much," said Figgins. "The pleasure is ours!"

That was really very neat for Figgins.

Cousin Ethel smiled again.

"It's awf'ly jollay of you to come, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "I——"

"It will be such a nice walk to St. Jim's," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"The—the hedges look ripping!" murmured Blake.

"They do!"

"And it's not too warm."

"Just right."

"But perhaps Cousin Ethel would prefer the hack," said Kerr.

"May I carry your bag?" said Figgins.

Cousin Ethel surrendered the bag to Figgins. It was an understood thing that that privilege always belonged to Figgins.

"Put it in the twap, Figgay, deah boy!" said D'Arcy.

"What!"

"Put it in the twap."

"What trap?"

"I have a twap waitin' to take Ethel to the school," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

The juniors glared at D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus had not really made up his mind till that moment whether he would use Lumley-Lumley's trap or not, but he made it up now in a hurry.

He had come to the station to meet his cousin, and he didn't intend to have her walked off under his eyes by a crowd of other fellows.

"I've got a twap waitin'," he went on serenely, unmoved by the looks of the other fellows. "You might like to dwive, Ethel. It's a good horse."

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"How thoughtful of you, Arthur!"

Arthur Augustus coloured a little.

"As a mattah of fact, the twap has been lent to me," he said. "It is a vewy nice and comfy one. This way, deah gal."

Even if Ethel had preferred to walk to the school, it was hardly possible for her to decline the trap, when her cousin had it ready for her. For though Tom Merry & Co. made it their business to meet the girl at the station, it was naturally Arthur Augustus's business in the first place.

"Very well, Arthur."

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "Of all the cheek——"

"Of all the nerve——"

"Of all the blessed impudence——"

"Did you speak, deah boys?"

"N-non-no——"

"I thought you said somethin', Lowthah."

"Oh, nothing!" muttered Lowther

Arthur Augustus was triumphant.

Disappointed as they were, the juniors had to admit that after all D'Arcy was the proper fellow to meet his own cousin at the station and take her to the school, and if he liked to provide a vehicle for the purpose, that was his business.

They left the station in a body.

Arthur Augustus walked ahead with Cousin Ethel, serene and cheerful, and the other fellows followed, looking daggers at the swell of St. Jim's.

At that moment most of them would have given a week's pocket-money for a chance of bumping D'Arcy in the dusty road.

But in the presence of Cousin Ethel, any polite little attention of that sort was out of the question.

"The bounder!" murmured Tom Merry, as they left the station. "And it's that rotter Lumley's trap all the time!"

"He's not in it, though," said Blake.

"Mellish is."

"Well, we can't say anything now. But——"

"But we'll jolly well bump Gussy for this presently!" said Figgins.

"Yes, rather!"

Cousin Ethel looked at the neat trap, and the handsome horse, and she smiled with pleasure. It was really a handsome turn-out.

"You like it, deah gal?" asked D'Arcy.

"Oh, yes, very much!"

D'Arcy handed his cousin into the trap, and stepped in himself. He gathered up the reins. In the warmth of the moment, on the platform, he had offered to let Cousin Ethel drive, but he did not mention that now. Unless Cousin Ethel mentioned it, D'Arcy was likely to keep the ribbons all the way to St. Jim's.

The juniors stood round, and looked at the swell of St. Jim's as he took the reins. There was no help for it; they had to let him go.

If the Outsider had been there, certainly, they might have stepped in, and probably Ethel would have declined to enter the trap.

But the Outsider was gone.

"See you again at St. Jim's, deah boys," said D'Arcy.

"You jolly well will!" muttered Figgins, under his breath. "Oh, won't I give you a bumping, you horrid bounder."

Cousin Ethel waved her hand.

The trap bowled down the street.

The juniors stood in a group outside the station looking after it. It disappeared.

Arthur Augustus smiled at the horse's ears. He was feeling very contented with himself, and quite amicable towards the Outsider. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had really been very useful to the elegant junior that afternoon.

The trap rattled out of the High Street, and into the leafy lane that led to the school.

Outside the village, between high hedges and big overhanging trees, it was very quiet and solitary. It was certainly a delightful drive.

D'Arcy glanced at his cousin, who was seated beside him in the front of the trap. Mellish was behind, making himself as small as possible. Mellish always felt uneasy and nervous in Ethel's company. He had a feeling that the girl saw right through his mean nature with her clear, pure eyes.

"Nice, isn't it, Ethel, deah gal?" said D'Arcy.

The girl nodded brightly.

"Yes, Arthur.'

"Bai Jove! Who's that?"

A figure stepped from the hedge into the lane.

It stopped directly in the path of the horse, and D'Arcy had to pull in. He did not need to ask who it was.

It was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

Mellish drew a deep breath. He was beginning to understand now the subtle scheme that the Outsider had formed, and of which D'Arcy was the unsuspecting victim.

Jerrold threw up his hand as a sign to D'Arcy to stop.

The swell of St. Jim's pulled the horse in.

"What is it?" he asked.

Lumley raised his cap to Cousin Ethel, and she gave him the slightest of nods in response. She could not be cordial to Jerrold Lumley.

"I want to speak to you, D'Arcy."

"Go ahead, deah boy."

"Get down a minute."

Arthur Augustus looped the reins, and descended from the trap. He was surprised at the request, but he could not very well refuse.

Lumley looked at Ethel.

"You'll excuse me, Miss Cleveland," he said. "I've got something important to say to D'Arcy, if you don't mind."

"Certainly," said the girl coldly.

"What is it, deah boy?" asked the swell of St. Jim's, a little impatiently. "I can't keep a lady waitin', you know."

"Come here."

D'Arcy, more surprised than ever, stepped into the belt of trees that ran beside the road at that point. For the moment he was hidden from the view of those in the trap. Further on there was a deep ditch, and on the very edge of it Lumley stopped. His manner was mysterious, and D'Arcy was surprised and impatient, and very curious, too.

"What on earth is the mattah, deah boy?" he exclaimed. "Pway what have you bwought me here for?"

"To stay!" said Lumley genially.

"Eh—ow! Bai Jove!"

Lumley, without a word of warning, gave the swell of St. Jim's a violent push.

D'Arcy reeled on the verge of the ditch, and, utterly unable to save himself, crashed heavily into it.

There were two feet of muddy and slimy water in the ditch, and the swell of St. Jim's almost disappeared in it.

He gasped and choked, and struggled to an upright position, choked and blinded by mud and slime and green ooze.

Lumley did not give him a second glance.

He sprang back quickly into the road.

Cousin Ethel looked at him as he appeared. Without meeting her eyes, he sprang into the trap, gathered up the reins, and struck the horse.

The girl was petrified for a moment.

But as the horse bounded furiously forward from Lumley's cruel blow, she found her voice.

"What does this mean?" she cried. "Where is my cousin?"

Lumley did not reply.

His grasp was on the reins, and all his skill was needed, too, for the horse had been hurt and frightened by his blow, and was bounding along madly.

The girl laid a hand on his arm in her alarm.

"Lumley, where is Arthur?"

"He's staying behind."

"Why?"

"I'll tell you—but I must look after the horse now."

Lumley set his teeth.

Cousin Ethel looked back. A draggled, muddy, dripping figure appeared from the trees into the lane, and looked wildly after the trap as it dashed away.

It was Arthur Augustus. He rubbed the mud from his eyes and looked, and as he did so, the trap rounded a bend, and vanished from his sight.

CHAPTER 6.
Carried Off!

LUMLEY-LUMLEY was a good driver, as he soon showed. The horse was wildly excited, and striving to break away, but the Outsider of St. Jim's soon had him well under control. But the trap continued to dash along at a high speed.

It rocked from its speed, and Mellish clung to the side in fear. Cousin Ethel showed no sign of fear. Her face was pale and set, but it was with anger and annoyance. She did not understand the Outsider's actions yet. But she understood enough to make her very angry.

The horse slackened down a little now, and Lumley turned to the girl with a smile.

The trap was still going at a great speed, however.

Cousin Ethel met Lumley's glance.

"Now, tell me what this means?" she said icily.

The Outsider laughed triumphantly.

"It means that I'm up against Tom Merry & Co., and I've done them," he replied.

"Done them."

"I guess so."

"I don't understand."

"I wanted to make one of the party to meet you at the station," said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "They wouldn't have me."

"You can hardly be surprised at that, I should think."

"Perhaps not. But I'm not the kind of fellow to take anything of that sort lying down. I said that I'd do them, and I have done them. I think I have scored all along the line."

"Did you push my cousin into the ditch?"

"I guess I did."

"Why?"

"To get rid of him," said Lumley coolly. "He had come to the end of his usefulness. I lent him the trap for my own reasons, not for his."

Ethel compressed her lips.

"You lent him the trap!"

"Yes. Poor old Gussy!" Lumley laughed contemptuously. "I never saw a chap so easy to fool."

"My cousin is a gentleman, and that is the reason," said Ethel, in a cutting tone. "It is easy to deceive one who is incapable of deception himself. I will not say what I think you are."

Lumley laughed.

"You may as well," he said. "I can stand it. I am not thin-skinned."

"I have discovered that. But now that you have played this ill-natured trick on my cousin, kindly stop the trap and put me down."

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"I guess not," he said.

Ethel's lips hardened.

"Do you mean that you are going to take me to the school, whether I like it or not?" she exclaimed angrily.

"Whether you like it or not, certainly," said Lumley coolly. "But I am not going to take you to the school."

"What!"

"I guess you heard what I said."

Ethel looked at him with fear for a moment. She did not understand the wild, hard, recklessness of the one-time Bowery boy of New York.

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed breathlessly.

Jerrold shrugged his shoulders.

"I mean that I'm going to beat Tom Merry & Co. all along the line. You were going to have tea with them—a picnic, weren't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, you can picnic with me instead."

"I refuse to do so."

He gave another shrug, but did not speak. Ethel fixed her eyes upon him. His meaning was slowly dawning upon her, but it seemed incredible.

"Do you mean"—her voice broke breathlessly, but she went on—"do you mean that you will force me to remain with you?"

"I guess so."

"You must be mad!"

He did not reply.

"I will not remain with you," said Ethel. "You shall put me down. Do you want to force me to jump from the trap."

"You won't do that, I guess, while we're going at this speed," said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "You'd kill yourself."

Ethel compressed her lips hard. It would certainly mean a deadly injury to jump from the trap while the horse was going so furiously. But to remain under compulsion with the Outsider. Even yet she could hardly believe that he was in earnest.

He gave a short laugh as he looked at her alarmed face.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "Do you think I'm going to hurt you? I won't touch you. You don't think I'm brute enough to hurt a girl, do you?"

"Let me get down!"

"No fear."

"But—but you dare not take me away like this?" panted Ethel. "Stop! I order you to stop! How dare you!"

"There are few things I don't dare."

"You—you coward!"

He laughed.

"You call me a coward, Miss Cleveland! Can you guess what Tom Merry and his friends will do to me for this?"

The girl's eyes flashed.

"They will punish you as you deserve."

He nodded coolly.

"Exactly. They will rag me bald-headed—half kill me, probably. And yet you call me a coward."

Ethel was silent.

Whatever Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was, certainly he was not a coward. He knew the vengeance that would follow his action, and the fellow who could face that coolly was certainly not a coward.

Mellish caught at Lumley's shoulder from behind. The cad of the Fourth was pale and shaken. He had thought that Lumley meant to get rid of D'Arcy and drive Ethel to the school. That he had dreamed of carrying her off for the afternoon against her will had never occurred to Mellish.

He was thoroughly frightened now. Punishment from the juniors, and a flogging from the Head, if the affair came out, loomed before Mellish's alarmed imagination.

"Let go my shoulder!" said Jerrold angrily.

"Stop!"

"What!"

"Stop the trap!"

"Fool!"

"Stop it, I tell you!" yelled Mellish. "You mad idiot! Do you want to be expelled from St. Jim's. Do you think I want to be expelled?"

"I don't care!"

"Well, I do care. Miss Cleveland! I had no hand in this! I hadn't the faintest idea Lumley had a mad scheme like this on!" gasped Mellish.

"Oh, shut up, you fool!" said Lumley, in his rudest tones. "You can jump out of the trap if you like."

"And break my neck?"

"Well, I guess it's not worth much."

"Stop!"

"Rubbish!"

"I tell you——"

"If you say another word I'll give you the butt of the whip," said Jerrold Lumley, between his teeth.

Mellish sank back into the trap, terrified. When Lumley was in that humour, Mellish was in deadly fear of him. The gates of St. Jim's were in sight now, and the trap was dashing up to them.

Kangaroo—Harry Noble of the Shell—was standing at the gates, looking out into the road. He was waiting for Tom Merry & Co. to come in with Cousin Ethel. At the sight of the girl sitting in the trap with Lumley and Mellish he looked astonished.

"My hat!" murmured the Cornstalk. "Ethel with the Outsider—and the others not with her! Blessed if I catch on!"

He raised his cap, and stepped into the road, expecting the trap to come to a halt.

But it did not.

Instead of that, Lumley-Lumley whipped up the horse at the sight of the Australian junior, and the trap whizzed by.

Kangaroo stared blankly.

He caught sight of the grim, hard face of the Outsider, of the terrified countenance of Mellish, and the pale, set features of Cousin Ethel.

The girl waved her hand, and called out something as the trap shot past. Kangaroo staggered as he heard it.

For he caught one word clearly.

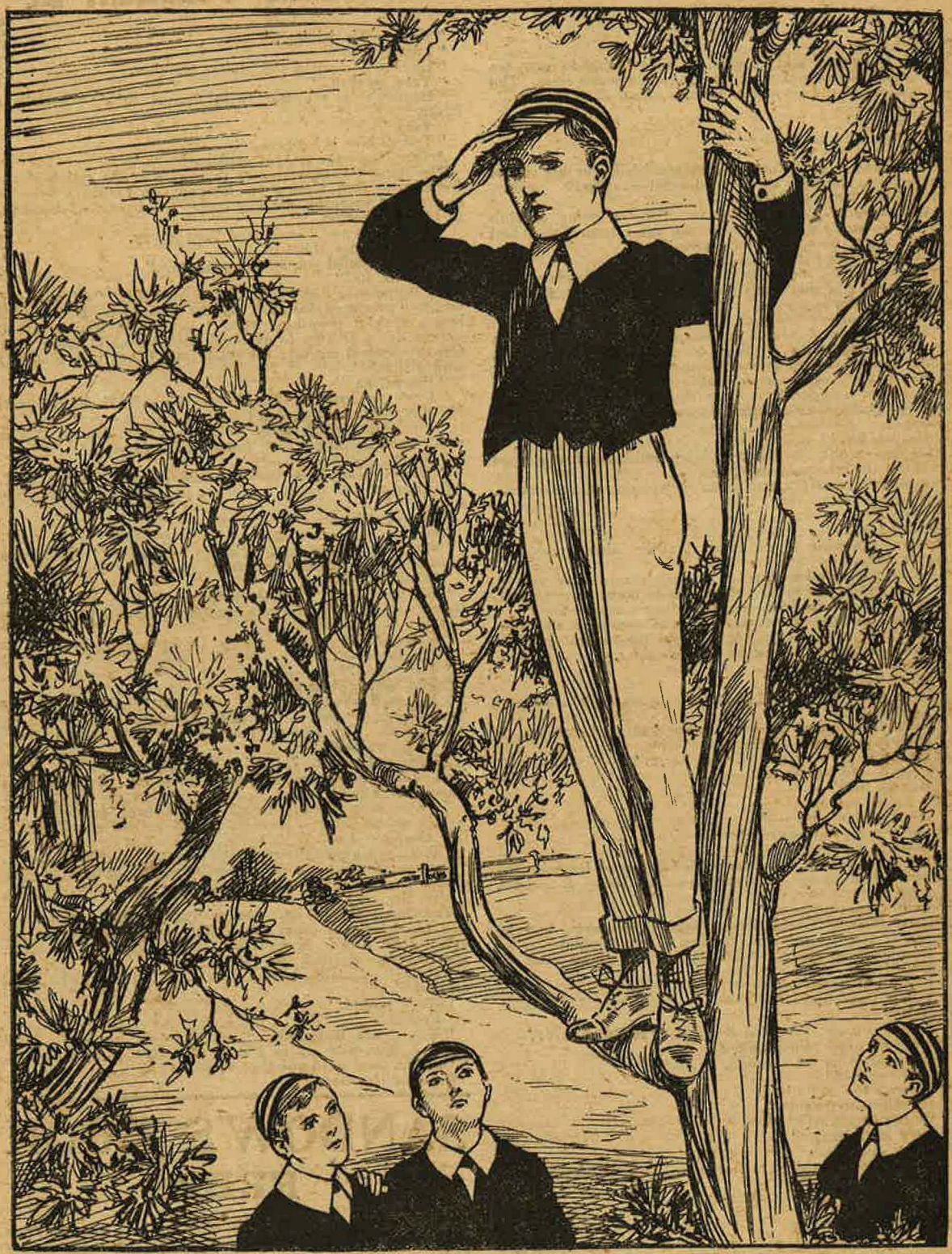
It was:

"Help!"

Then the trap dashed down the road in a cloud of dust.

CHAPTER 7.
Hot on the Track.

TOM MERRY & CO. walked slowly away from the railway-station in Rylcombe. They were exasperated with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for carrying off Ethel in that barefaced manner, and especially for borrowing Lumley-Lumley's trap for the purpose. As they walked down the High Street, they discussed what they would do to D'Arcy when he was in their hands; after the departure of Cousin Ethel from the school, of course.



Tom Merry suddenly uttered a shout of triumph. From his point of vantage he could see the trap containing Lumley-Lumley and Cousin Ethel tearing madly along the country road.

Fatty Wynn paused as they passed Mother Murphy's tuck-shop.

"I suppose we'd better look in here," he remarked

"Rats!" said Tom Merry.

"Aren't you dry? What price a ginger-pop?"

"Bosh!"

"And a few tarts——"

"Stuff!"

"Well, I'll follow you," said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins and Kerr exchanged a glance, and linked arms with their plump chum, one on either side.

"Coming in too?" asked Fatty.

"No."

"Then leggo!"

"You come on," said Figgins. "We're going to have tea with Cousin Ethel, and you're not going to waste time. The trap will get to the school ten minutes ahead of us anyway."

"Yes, but——"

"This way."

"I'm feeling a bit faint——"

"Rats!"

"Look here," said Fatty Wynn wrathfully, as his chums marched him forcibly on after the School House juniors. "Look here, I don't see——"

"Oh, come on!" said Figgins. "We're going to club together to stand a really decent tea for Cousin Ethel, and we shall want you to do the catering."

The fat Fourth-Former brightened up.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "Of course, I'm always willing to do anything of that sort. How much are you chaps thinking of spending?"

"What about two bob each?" said Blake.

"That will be a pound, including Gussy," Fatty Wynn remarked thoughtfully. "With careful shopping, we ought to get a very decent spread for a pound, and enough for eleven—or say twelve, as I shall count as two—I think I ought to be considered, if I do the catering. On second thoughts, perhaps we'd better get to St. Jim's as quickly as possible."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors left the village behind, and walked at a good rate down the lane towards the school.

Suddenly Tom Merry uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"What on earth's that?"

"Phew!"

"Great Scott!"

A terrible-looking figure came limping along the road towards them.

Its face was caked with mud, its clothes were thick with it, and mud and water squelched out of its boots as it walked, and dripped from its baggy, soaked trousers and jacket.

For the moment the juniors did not recognise the newcomer. That awful-looking figure, and the elegant swell of St. Jim's, seemed as far as the poles asunder.

"What on earth——"

"What the dickens——"

"It's a giddy scarecrow got loose."

"Looks like it."

"Some chap had an accident, I should think."

"Been in a ditch, I suppose."

"My hat! He's whiffy, whoever he is!"

"Keep to the windward."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The figure spoke.

"Weally, deah boys——"

There was a yell of astonishment.

"Gussy!"

D'Arcy felt for his eyeglass, rubbed the mud from it, and jammed it into his eye. He surveyed Tom Merry & and Co. forlornly.

"Weally, you know——"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Figgins, in alarm, and he gripped D'Arcy by the arm, careless of the handful of mud he gained by so doing. "D'Arcy! Has there been an accident?"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Was the trap upset?"

"Weally——"

"Speak, you ass!" shouted Figgins. "Is Ethel hurt?"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Has there been an accident, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Where's the trap?"

"I weally don't know."

"What's happened?"

"I fell in the ditch."

Figgins shook him.

"Was there an accident to the trap?" he demanded fiercely.

"Not at all, deah boy."

"Then Cousin Ethel is all right?"

"I pwesume so."

Figgins released him.

"Oh, all right," he said, growing a little red as he saw that the juniors were grinning. "I—I was afraid——"

"It's all wight, but I am all w'ong. My clothes are wuined."

"How on earth did you get like that?" asked Tom Merry, in wonder. "What did you leave the trap for, and where is it? Is Cousin Ethel driving?"

"Wathah not!"

"You didn't trust that horse to Mellish?" asked Kerr quickly.

"Certainly not."

"Then who's driving?"

"Lumlay!"

"Lumley!" shouted the juniors together.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Lumley's in the trap with Cousin Ethel!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas."

"Tell us how it happened."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy explained.

The juniors, exasperated as they were at the action of the Outsider in thus forcing his company on Cousin Ethel—for as yet they suspected nothing more—could not help laughing at D'Arcy's recital.

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Lumley fooled you all along the line."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose he did," said D'Arcy ruefully. "Of course, I was not pwepared for such beastly tweachery. I shall give him a feahful thwashin' when I get to St. Jim's. It is imposs. for a D'Arcy to ovahlook such a feahful insult. He actually pushed me into the ditch, you know, in a feahfully wuff mannah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause whatevah for this wibald mewwiment. My clothes are wuined, and I am in a feahful state."

"You're in a jolly smelly state," said Tom Merry. "You won't mind keeping a little further off, will you?"

"Weally, you know——"

"You've been done brown," said Figgins, with a sniff. "Of course, we might have expected something of this sort."

"Weally, Figgins—"

Tom Merry frowned darkly.

"But that doesn't excuse Lumley," he said. "A jape is a jape, and it doesn't matter how he's handled Gussy——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Oh, ring off! It doesn't matter what's happened to Gussy. But Lumley forcing himself on Cousin Ethel in this way is a little bit too thick."

"I should say so."

"The bounder!"

"The rotter!"

"The rank outsider!"

"We shall have to let him alone till Ethel's gone," said Tom Merry. "But then I think he ought to be made an example of. This sort of thing has got to be stopped."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's get to St. Jim's," said Figgins abruptly. "My hat! I don't know how I shall keep my hands off that waster till Ethel's gone."

"I feel in a howwid state," said D'Arcy dolefully. "I weally do not like to pwesent myself at the school lookin' like this, you know."

"Well, you aren't pretty, that's certain," said Tom Merry. "Suppose you go and have a swim in the Ryll, with your clothes on. That will clean you a bit."

"Weally, you know——"

The chums hurried on. Arthur Augustus went with them, still squelching at every step. They came in sight of the gates of St. Jim's. Kangaroo came running towards them. His face was startled and pale.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Has Cousin Ethel arrived?"

"She's passed."

"Passed!"

"Yes," said Kangaroo. "Can you tell me what it all means? She came up in a trap with Lumley and Mellish. I thought they were going to stop——"

"And didn't they?"

"No."

"Why—what——"

"Lumley drove right out, and Cousin Ethel called out 'Help!'"

The juniors stood petrified.

"The trap had passed me then, and it was too late to try and stop it," said Kangaroo. "Lumley was going at a fearful rate, and he was round the bend yonder in a shake of a lamb's tail. What does it all mean?"

The juniors looked at one another.

For the moment they were too dumbfounded to speak. They knew the reckless hardihood of the Outsider, but they had never expected, never dreamed of anything like this.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry at last.

"What does it mean?"

"Mean!" shouted Figgins. "It means that Lumley has taken Ethel away—against her will—and that we're going after him to—to smash him!"

He started running up the road. Kerr caught him by the arm and stopped him. For the first time in his life, Figgins gave his chum a fierce look.

"Let go!" he cried.

"Hold on, Figgy!" said Kerr, in his cool, quiet way. "No need to play the goat, old chap. If that trap was going at top speed, as Kangy says, you'll never sight it again on foot. You've got no chance."

"But——"

"Bai Jove! We shall have to get anothah twap——"

"No time," said the Scottish junior. "The bicycles."

"Of course!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The delay of an instant was exasperating to Figgins. But he had to admit that Kerr was right. On foot, the juniors would have had only a useless run for their pains.

"The bikes—quick!" muttered Blake.

They rushed into the quad.

"Wait for me while I change my clothes, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus, pelting off towards the School House.

But no one listened to him.

Ten juniors—for Kangaroo had joined the party—tore off towards the bike shed for their machines. Tom Merry dragged D'Arcy's machine out, but the swell of St. Jim's was changing his clothes in the School House, and was not there to take it. It was left standing against the shed as the juniors ran their bikes rapidly down to the gates. D'Arcy's clothes needed changing, it is true; but the other fellows were not likely to wait for him under the circumstances.

They ran the bikes into the road, and mounted. Hardly a word was spoken. The hard, set faces of the juniors showed how deep their indignation and anger were, and their looks hinted what Lumley-Lumley might expect when they caught him. And they were determined to capture him.

They mounted in the road, and started off at a high speed, and as soon as they were fairly going, they scorched for all they were worth. Right off they went, in a cloud of dust, on the track of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

But would they catch him?

That was the question!

CHAPTER 8.

On the Road.

COUSIN ETHEL sat in the trap beside Lumley-Lumley, her face pale, her lips set, and not uttering a word.

She had recovered from her surprise at the unexpected action of the Outsider; but her anger was unabated.

Cousin Ethel was seldom angry, and never without cause; but she was angry now, and it showed in her set lips and the gleam in her blue eyes.

Lumley glanced at her several times, as he handled the reins, but she did not meet his glance. She appeared unconscious of his presence; her manner was cold as ice.

The Outsider did not seem to care.

There was a light of triumph in his eyes.

He had carried off Cousin Ethel under the very noses of Tom Merry & Co. It was a triumph for him, whatever the consequences were—a triumphant reply to their refusal to let him join their party, their refusal to allow him to meet the girl.

Lumley, careless of consequences, ready to endure with his usual hardihood whatever might befall, was satisfied, triumphant.

It was not so with Mellish.

The cad of the Fourth was afraid of Tom Merry & Co., but still more of his companion, whose character was terrifying to a fellow like Mellish. Strength of character of any sort made Mellish uneasy; and as for Lumley, he seemed to Mellish just then quite capable of developing into a criminal—as perhaps he was!

Mellish was only anxious to get out of the trap, and escape from the companionship of the Outsider. But that was not easily done.

While the trap was dashing along at the top speed of the mettlesome horse, it was as much as Mellish's life and limbs were worth to drop out of the trap.

He sat and quivered.

Lumley was a good driver; he seemed to have wrists of steel, and his eye and his hand were equally sure.

But he was given to taking risks that might have been fatal to a less expert handler of the ribbons.

The trap dashed round corners at top speed, and more than once Mellish's heart jumped almost into his mouth, as the wheel grazed a bank or a fence, or escaped the edge of a ditch by half an inch.

Cousin Ethel did not move a muscle.

Even if she felt alarmed, she would not show a sign of fear to meet the mocking eyes of the Outsider.

A grim admiration was creeping into Lumley's face. More than once he purposely gave the vehicle a narrow shave to test the girl's nerve.

But Ethel did not flinch.

"By George," said Lumley at last, "you are a girl! I've never seen a girl I admire so much as I do you, Miss Cleveland."

"Thank you!"

"Ah! I guess you're mad with me," said Lumley, who always spoke in an American idiom, the result of his early training in the streets of New York. "I guess you'd like to see Tom Merry hammering me right now!"

Ethel was silent.

"Don't you like the drive?" asked Lumley.

"Not with you!"

The Outsider winced.

"Not with me; but you'd like it otherwise?"

"Yes."

"Good! Do you know," said Lumley, "I'm a millionaire's son, and I can have as much money as I care to ask my pater for. I've a hundred pounds in banknotes in my pockets now. I'd give it all to have you say that you liked this drive with me, Miss Cleveland."

The girl looked at him.

Her thought was that the Outsider was mocking her; but his keen, sharp face was quite earnest. Jerrold Lumley meant what he said.

"Nonsense!" said Ethel.

"I guess I mean it!"

"It is nonsense all the same."

"I've never met a girl like you over there," said Lumley. He spoke of America as "over there." "I guess I'm more American than English, you know. You'd get to like me perhaps if you knew me better."

"This is hardly the way to make one like you."

Lumley laughed.

"I don't know. You wouldn't speak to me otherwise, would you? You're only with me now because you have no choice in the matter."

Ethel did not answer.

The trap dashed on, and trees and fields and hedgerows flashed past. A great deal of ground had been covered. Ethel knew the countryside pretty well close round St. Jim's, but they were getting into country now that she did not know. Where was the Outsider taking her?

What were her friends doing? She knew that Kangaroo had heard her call. Tom Merry & Co. would follow.

But would they find her?

Could they overtake the trap that was bowling along at so great a speed? What was to be the outcome of that strange afternoon's adventure. That she had anything to fear from Lumley she did not think for a moment; he had said that he was not brute enough to hurt a girl, and she believed him. But to be carried off from her friends and compelled to spend the afternoon in the company of one she heartily detested, that was bad enough. And then, when Tom Merry & Co. caught Lumley—the girl could imagine the scene, and it troubled her.

Her pretty forehead wrinkled as she sat in the trap.

Fields and hedges flashed past.

The horse was settling down now to a hard, long run, and Lumley knew how to get the best speed out of his animal.

The trap rocked and creaked as it dashed on. Mellish turned a dozen shades of colour as it narrowly escaped hedges and fences and ditches.

"I say, Lumley," he exclaimed at last, "put me down! I can't stand this!"

Lumley's mocking laugh rang out.

"You can jump out if you like!" he said.

"I should break my neck."

"No loss!"

"Look here, Lumley——"

"I guess I'm not going to stop for you, Mellish."

Cousin Ethel looked at the pallid junior in the trap. She took pity on him, though she despised his cowardice.

"Let him get out, Lumley," she said.

Lumley looked at her.

"If I slacken, you will get out," he said. "I can't afford to risk it. I've taken too much trouble to throw up the cards now."

Ethel hesitated a moment.

"I will remain here while Mellish gets out," she said.

Lumley nodded.

"I know I can take your word," he said.

He slackened speed at once.

Mellish rose from his seat. He was white and shaken. Lumley gave him a glance of hard scorn.

"I sha'n't be sorry to be rid of you," he said cuttingly. "You've been all the use you can be to me. You're a coward, too."

"I—I——"

"Oh, don't jaw! Get out!"

Mellish clambered over the back of the trap, and hung on, his feet clattering against the ground and kicking up clouds of dust.

"Stop!" he gasped. "Stop!"

"You can drop it."

"I shall be hurt."

"I don't care!"

"Stop, please!" said Ethel.

"Oh, very well!"

Lumley brought the trap to a stop. He looked back at Mellish, not even looking at the girl by his side. He knew she would keep her word. Lumley would not have given her a second thought if she had been capable of breaking her word. He was a breaker of the most solemn promises himself, but he knew what to respect in others.

Mellish dropped from the trap.

"You can go back," said Lumley. "Keep out of the way of Tom Merry. Only, if you meet those chaps, don't tell them I'm going to Wayland."

Mellish's eyes glinted.

"All right!" he said.

The trap drove on. Mellish stood panting for some time, and then at last he turned back for the long and weary tramp towards St. Jim's.

Ethel glanced at Lumley as he drove on. He had turned into a lane that led to the west, under shadowing oak-trees.

"This is not the direction of Wayland," she said.

He laughed.

"I guess not."

"But you said to Mellish——"

"That was for him to repeat to Tom Merry."

"But—but you asked him——"

"Ha, ha!" The Outsider laughed. "You see, I know he's as spiteful as a cat; and, besides, he'll try to make his peace with Tom Merry by telling him all he can. He'll tell him we've gone to Wayland if he meets him."

"And——"

"And, as a matter of fact, we're going in the opposite direction," said Lumley-Lumley coolly.

The trap dashed on.

CHAPTER 9.
In Sight.

TING-TING-TING!

Buz-z-z-z-z!

Half a dozen bicycle bells rang out on the dusty road, and Mellish stopped, and jumped aside. A bunch of cyclists swept up, and he waited for them to pass. But they did not pass; they clattered to a halt, and jumped off their machines.

Then the cad of the Fourth recognised Tom Merry & Co.

There were nine of the juniors now. Digby had had a puncture, and had been compelled to drop out of the race. The nine surrounded Mellish, and he shivered as he recognised them.

Tom Merry grasped him by the shoulder.

"Jolly lucky meeting!" he said. "This shows we're on the right track so far, you fellows."

"What-ho!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "Mellish was in the trap when it passed the school gates."

"Where is Lumley, Mellish?"

"Where is Cousin Ethel?"

Mellish licked his dry lips.

"Hands off!" he muttered. "I—I hadn't a hand in the game, I'll swear! I hadn't the faintest idea what Lumley intended to do."

"I believe that," said Tom Merry contemptuously. "You wouldn't have the pluck. Where is Cousin Ethel now?"

"In the trap."

"With Lumley?"

"Yes."

"Where are they going?"

"To Wayland."

"Wayland!" said Blake. "It's a long way round."

"He was trying to throw you off the track."

"Good!" said Herries. "We can take a short cut to Wayland and get there first, and head the rotter off."

"Good egg!" said Figgins.

"You're sure he was going to Wayland?" asked Tom Merry.

"He asked me not to tell you if I met you."

"Looks right enough, you fellows."

"Hold on!" said Kerr, in his cautious way. "We want to be careful, you know. I don't see what he's going to Wayland for."

"You think Mellish is lying?"

"I'll swear——" began Mellish.

"No," said the Scottish junior. "Mellish may be telling us the truth, but that's no reason to suppose that Lumley told him the truth."

"By Jove, you're right!"

"My impression is, that if Lumley said he was going to Wayland, he's really going anywhere but Wayland," Kerr remarked.

Tom Merry nodded.

"I think you're right."

"Of course he is!" said Figgins. "I was an ass not to think of it at once! Let's get on, you chaps."

"Good!"

"You're going back to St. Jim's, Mellish?"

"Yes."

"If you meet D'Arcy or Dig tell them where you left us, so that they can come on if they like. Where did you leave Lumley?"

Mellish pointed up the road.

"About a mile up the high road. I looked back, and saw him drive into a lane on the right a few minutes after I left the trap."

"Thanks!"

The juniors remounted their machines. Although Mellish had had a hand in the affair, they were willing enough to let him go. They believed that he had not known Lumley's intentions, and in any case he had only been a tool in the hand of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

"Let's get on," said Tom Merry. "One thing's jolly certain—we're going faster on the bikes than the trap can possibly go, and so, if we don't lose the track, we're bound to come up with the Outsider."

"And then——" said Figgins, between his teeth.

"Then we'll make him sorry for himself."

"What-ho!"

The juniors of St. Jim's remounted their bicycles and rode on.

The meeting with Mellish had made them more hopeful.

They had had a long ride, and, having seen nothing of the trap, and gained only the vaguest information from passers-by, they had begun to believe that Lumley-Lumley had succeeded in giving them the slip.

People on the road and in the fields had answered their questions, and they had heard of a trap furiously driven, but the information had been very vague and uncertain. Now Mellish had confirmed it.

Lumley-Lumley was not so very far ahead: they were on the right track, and they were going faster than the trap.

In a very short time Tom Merry & Co. reached the place which answered to Mellish's description, and they turned their machines into the lane the trap had followed.

"We're going directly away from Wayland," Fatty Wynn remarked.

"Just as I expected," said Kerr.

"So you did, old man."

Tom Merry's eyes scanned the road as they pedalled on.

The lane was one not much used by vehicles, and in the dust of the road he could see recent wheel-marks.

Whether they had been made by Lumley's trap was a question, but it was very probable, and the sign was a hopeful one.

The juniors pedalled harder than ever.

The lane narrowed down, and the grass grew in the road, and here the wheel-marks were as plain as ever.

Ahead, through the trees, the juniors caught a glimpse of wide silver rolling in the sun. It was a river.

"We're coming to a bridge, I suppose," said Manners.

The road was growing rougher. There was a sudden pop as Manners spoke, and he uttered a sharp exclamation.

"There goes my tyre!"

He slackened down.

"Sorry, old chap!" called out Tom Merry, as he passed.

"Oh, it's all right! Keep on; see you later, perhaps."

And Manners jumped off his machine.

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He had it upside down by the roadside and was at work on the tyre before the party had swept out of sight. It was rough on Manners, as it had been rough on Digby, but it could not be helped. The trap had to be overtaken, and it was agreed among the juniors that if anybody had to stop he could not be waited for.

Tom Merry & Co. rode on.

The track they were following led into a wide, country road, and that road ran beside the river.

On one side was a park fence, with big trees nodding over it; on the other the ground dropped away gently in a grassy slope towards the gleaming water.

The juniors turned into the road, and then Tom Merry paused.

Which way had the trap gone?

It might have turned either to right or to left, and there was no indication on the hard surface of the high road.

Figgins gritted his teeth. Had they lost the track?

"Hang it!" said Herries. "If we only had Towser here! He'd smell out the track in half a twink, you know!"

But no one listened to Herries. They were not inclined to argue just then about the merits of his favourite bulldog.

Tom Merry climbed a tree by the roadside, and, holding to a branch with his foot on another, swept the road up and down with his keen eyes.

He uttered a sudden shout.

"Hurrah!"

"Seen them?" yelled Figgins.

Tom Merry came slithering down the tree.

"I think so!" he exclaimed excitedly. "There's a trap going like anything, with two people in it! I can't make them out, but I think——"

"Come on!"

The juniors were on their machines in a twinkling, and riding up the road. The ground flew under the flashing wheels.

The juniors of St. Jim's had scorched before, but never as they scorched now. The cycles seemed to fly.

Tom Merry was a little ahead, but Figgins was very nearly level. The rest were strung out behind.

The trap was soon easily in sight.

The figures of a boy and girl were recognisable sitting in it, and the juniors had no more doubt that they were the ones they sought.

Figgins eyes blazed.

"We'll have him soon!" he muttered.

"Five minutes more!" said Tom Merry, gasping.

The New House junior gritted his teeth hard.

"And when we lay hold of him, Tom——"

"All right, Figgy."

"You'll leave him to me?"

"If you like."

Figgins looked grim. It was likely to go hard with the Outsider of St. Jim's when Figgins got within hitting distance of him. There would be no need for the others to touch him. Figgins would do enough—perhaps more than enough.

The cyclists swept on.

As they swept nearer, they could quite recognise the forms in the trap; they saw Lumley-Lumley look back, and then begin to whip the horse savagely. They saw Cousin Ethel look back and wave her hand.

"We've got him now."

"Put it on!"

"Two minutes more."

Lumley lashed the horse with savage force. The animal bounded on, but it was growing worn with the hard drive. And it was not equal in any case to the speed the Outsider of St. Jim's required of it.

Harder the Outsider drove, and harder the horse strained, and the wheels of the trap seemed to leave the ground as it dashed on.

But faster still the cyclists came on behind.

The juniors were fully confident now.

They were closing in on the trap. Nothing could save the Outsider of St. Jim's from capture now.

"We've got him!" muttered Figgins, once more.

Lumley looked back.

The leading cyclists were within twenty yards of the trap. He caught a full sight of the grim, set face of Figgins.

He saw Tom Merry swerve a little to the side, and he knew what that meant. Tom Merry was going to shoot past the trap, dismount ahead, and block the way.

And Lumley could not prevent him.

The Outsider gritted his teeth.

His glance swept round savagely, and rested on the river, on the grassy slope down to the bank and the shining waters beyond.

Cousin Ethel looked at him.

"Stop!" she said.

Lumley-Lumley gave her a dogged glance.

"I guess not."

"You are risking your life and mine," said the girl, in a low voice. "This is a lonely road; but if you met a market-cart, or a motor——"

"I guess I don't care."

"You must be mad."

The Outsider laughed mockingly.

"I guess I've never caved in yet," he said, between his teeth. "I guess they won't beat me this time."

"Be sensible. You cannot get away now——"

"I guess I've an idea."

"What do you mean?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll see."

Tom Merry was abreast of the trap now. He shot past it, pedalling ahead on the hard white road.

Jack Blake shot ahead on the other side, and sprang to the ground a hundred yards ahead of the dashing horse. Intrepidly the two juniors rushed into the road and threw up their hands to stop the horse.

Figgins was only a couple of yards behind the trap. The others were coming on at top speed.

It seemed all up with the Outsider.

But Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had a card yet to play—a desperate one. He dragged on the reins, and the horse swung from the road.

"Stop!" yelled Tom Merry.

The Outsider was deaf—the horse obeyed the rein. The trap swung off the road upon the grass.

Cousin Ethel clung to the seat as the vehicle swayed and rocked. Lumley sat as still as a bronze image. He was driving on, on, straight towards the gleaming river.

"Good heavens!" cried Cousin Ethel. "What do you mean to do?"

He did not reply.

Right on he drove. The cyclists were pedalling over the grass now towards him, with many a bump. Tom Merry and Blake, and Figgins, on foot, were tearing madly towards the trap. But they had no chance of reaching it in time. Right down to the grassy, sedgy bank the Outsider drove; and right on, into the gleaming water, and the next moment the horse and trap were afloat, and the juniors were standing baffled and furious on the water's edge.

CHAPTER 10.

Lumley Gets Ahead.

TOM MERRY & CO. stood on the bank, looking out over the water. They could hardly believe their eyes for the moment.

They had not expected that hardy recklessness on the part of even the Outsider of St. Jim's.

"The fool!" muttered Tom, between his teeth. "The mad fool!"

Lumley-Lumley did not look back.

Hasty as his action had been, he had observed everything before he acted, and he was quite aware of what he was doing.

He drove the trap into the water till it was a dozen yards from the bank. The river was shallow here, as the clumps of willows and rushes emerging from the water had shown to Lumley's keen eyes. At a dozen yards from the bank, the horse was up to its shoulders in the water, and the trap was barely afloat. The water washed into the vehicle as Lumley drew it to a stop. Another two strides of the horse, and it would have been under water. But as yet neither Lumley nor Cousin Ethel was wetted in the least. A plunge of the horse might have sent them at any second, however, into the bosom of the river. But Lumley's hand was like iron on the rein, and the horse knew his master.

The juniors stood on the bank.

They were quite ready to plunge into the river to the aid of Ethel, but it flashed into Tom Merry's mind that that was the worst thing they could do for her, and he waved his comrades back.

Lumley was desperate, and he seemed determined to stop at nothing.

When the trap was halted, Lumley glanced over his shoulder.

He was ready to drive on if the juniors entered the water.

A sneering laugh fell from his lips.

"Stop where you are!" he called out.

"You cad!" shouted Figgins.

Lumley laughed again.

"Not a step nearer," he said. "If one of you enters the water, I shall drive on."

"You'll drown yourself, and Miss Cleveland, too, if you're not careful," said Kerr.

"I'll risk that."

"Are you mad?"

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess I'm going to come out ahead on this deal," he said. "Miss Cleveland is going to spend the afternoon with me, and have tea with me."

"She does not wish to."

"Oh, come off!"

"Let her speak for herself, then," cried Figgins.

"I guess not. I'm running this show."

"Look here, Lumley," said Tom Merry, eyeing the Outsider of Greyfriars steadily across the expanse of shallow water, "you know you'll get into trouble for this. You're at an English public school, not in the Bowery of New York now. This is the kind of thing fellows get into prison for. You'll be expelled from St. Jim's if this gets to the Head's ears."

"I guess the Head won't find it easy to expel me."

"I know your father has tricked him into some agreement," said Tom Merry sharply, "but you've had a flogging already, and you may have another."

"I guess I can stand it."

"You'll get worse than a flogging from us," said Figgins.

"I can stand that, too."

"Then you won't come ashore."

"I guess not."

The juniors clenched their hands.

Appeals to Jerrold were evidently useless. He was not afraid of the consequences of his act, and an appeal to his better nature was futile, because he did not seem to have any better nature.

Ethel sat silent.

She was not frightened, though she had ample reason to be. But she was not so calm as she had been. The water gleaming and flowing round the trap, the wide, shallow expanse into which Lumley would drive if he were pursued further—the shaking vehicle, the plunging horse—all combined to shake her courage. And she was beginning to fear the hard, desperate boy at her side.

Her face was very pale now.

Lumley looked mockingly at the juniors.

"You can go back the way you came," he said. "I swear that if you enter the water, I'll drive across to the other side, whatever the consequences."

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

But Jerrold Lumley held the trump card. For Ethel's sake, the juniors dared not enter the river.

Lumley looked at them with a sneer, and then his glance swept across the river. He had already discerned a boat by the further bank, with a lad in it, fishing. The lad was a stolid-looking country youth younger than Lumley. His boat was moored to the willows, and he had a line out, but he was neglecting it now, standing up in his boat to stare across the river at the trap in the water.

Lumley waved his hand to the lad.

"Bring that boat over here," he called out.

The boy stared at him.

"I'll give you five pounds to use your boat," called out Lumley, and he held a rustling banknote in the air.

The lad still stared; but Lumley's meaning sank into his slow brain, and he suddenly cast off his mooring, seized his oars, and rowed out into the river. The boat came rapidly towards the submerged trap.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances.

"He'll get away!" muttered Blake.

"What can we do?"

"Hang it! Nothing."

Figgins clenched his hands till the nails dug into the palms.

"Oh, if I could get a grip on him!" he muttered.

"You can't."

"We can't let him take her away under our eyes."

"Hold on, Figgy! He's rotter enough for anything—if you get into the water, he'll drive on."

Cousin Ethel waved her hand to the juniors.

"Please stay on the bank," she called out, in her low, clear voice.

"We'll follow you, Ethel," said Tom Merry. "We'll make that scoundrel suffer for this!"

Lumley laughed.

"My turn now, though," he remarked.

Tom Merry shouted to the lad in the boat. But the country youth did not appear to understand. The distance was great, and perhaps the rustling banknote in Lumley's hand had a great deal of effect.

The boat came up to the trap.

It glided past the shaking, plunging horse, and the bows grated against the step of the vehicle. It was almost aground.

"'Ere you are, zur," said the lad.

"Thank you," said Lumley. "Will you step in, Ethel?"

The girl hesitated.

"You don't want to stay here, I guess," said Lumley coolly. "The trap will be settling down in the mud, and you'll be in the water in ten minutes at the furthest. The horse will be getting the shivers, too."

"Very well," said Ethel quietly, with compressed lips.

She stepped into the boat.

Lumley released the reins, and jumped in after her.

"Look here, my lad," he said; "take that trap back to the Golden Pig, near Rylcombe, and I'll pay you well for it. Come up to St. Jim's, and ask for Master Lumley. Here's your fiver for the boat. I'll leave it somewhere for you and let you know."

"Please——"

"No talk! Get into the trap!"

The slow youth was hesitating, evidently not accustomed to the keen, quick American ways of Lumley. But the Outsider of St. Jim's wasted no time. He had paid liberally and he meant to be obeyed.

He shoved the lad into the trap, and then seized the oars and pushed the boat further into the stream. The country youth, in a dazed frame of mind, took the reins, and pulled the horse round towards the bank.

The boat glided out into the middle of the river.

Lumley-Lumley had never shown off at St. Jim's as a good oarsman, but he proved that he was one now. He went with the current, and fairly made the boat fly. He did not ask Cousin Ethel to take the rudder lines.

Tom Merry & Co. stood on the bank and watched them, with feelings too deep for words.

Cousin Ethel waved her hand silently.

Lumley grinned.

The juniors surrounded the country youth as he brought the horse and trap ashore. They shouted at him and said things to him, but apparently only with the effects of still further confusing his slow wits.

"Let him alone," said Tom Merry, with a short laugh. "It's too late now to do any good, anyway. The Outsider's gone, and we've got to follow him."

"Yes, rather!"

"There's no other boat in sight," said Blake.

"There's the road beside the river, though, and we can keep the boat in sight," said Tom Merry.

"Good! Let's get on."

They mounted and rode along the white, dusty road, the river gleaming on their right, and the boat in sight on the shining water.

But the road made a curve and left the river, and thick woods intervened, and once more Jerrold Lumley was lost to their view.

CHAPTER 11.

Lumley to the Rescue.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY laughed lightly as his eyes swept the bank, and he saw only thick woods dark against the bright sky. The cyclists had disappeared.

Cousin Ethel did not look at him.

She gave one anxious glance towards the bank, and that was all.

"Exeunt Tom Merry & Co.!" said Jerrold.

Ethel did not reply.

"That was a close shave, I guess, back there," said Jerrold Lumley. "But they won't find it easy to corner me, I guess. What do you think?"

"I think you are very reckless and very bad," said Ethel.

"Thank you."

"You are causing a great deal of trouble for nothing, and you brought both of us into danger."

Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"That was not my fault; it was theirs. Didn't I say that I was going to score over Tom Merry & Co.? I mean it, every time. You're going to spend the afternoon with me, Cousin Ethel. You're going to have tea with me. Then I'm going to take you back to the school at five o'clock or so, just as would have happened if you had been with those fellows."

Ethel looked at him steadily.

"I shall not have tea with you," she said.

"Then you will be hungry," said Jerrold, laughing.

She was silent.

"Come, come, why should you make it a point to be angry with me?" urged the Outsider. "Why not make up your mind to enjoy the outing?"

"That is not likely."

"I don't see why not. I'm not such a bad fellow, you know, when I'm treated well, and you can't say I've hurt you."

"I'm not afraid that you will hurt me. But you have forced me to come with you against my will. You cannot expect me to forgive that."

"You wouldn't have come otherwise."

"Quite true."

"Well, it is an adventure," said Lumley good-humouredly.

The trap rocked and creaked as it dashed on. Mellish turned a dozen shades of colour as it narrowly escaped hedges and fences and ditches. "I say, Lumley," he exclaimed at last, "put me down! I can't stand this!"

"You have nothing to complain of. I guess I shall suffer the most. They will rag me to rags when they get me to themselves at St. Jim's."

"I think that very probable."

"I guess I don't weaken, though."

"If you take me ashore now," said Ethel quietly, "I will speak to Tom Merry and—and the others, and ask them not to punish you."

Lumley laughed sneeringly

"Thank you for nothing. Do you think I want to be protected behind a girl? Whatever they do, I guess I can stand it."

"You are very foolish."

"Thank you again."

The boat glided on. Since the cyclists had disappeared behind the trees, Lumley had taken it more easily. The current glided on with the boat, with an occasional dip of the oars.

"Do you know where we are going?" Lumley asked suddenly.

Ethel shook her head.

"No."

"Neither do I," said Lumley. "I thought you might, as you know this country better than I do. I haven't been at the school long."

"It is too far from St. Jim's," said Ethel, glancing round at the green, well-wooded banks, over which in the distance rose in one place a cloud of smoke, indicating the neighbourhood of a town. "I have never been here before, and you turned so often in the trap that I quite lost the direction."

"So did I," said Jerrold. "Never mind. If we follow the river we shall come to something, I suppose. There's a stream that flows into the Ryll about a mile from St. Jim's. This may be it."

Ethel nodded.

"It is very likely," she said. "It is roughly in this direction from the school, at all events. But I cannot say."

Jerrold grinned.

"In that case we're getting towards St. Jim's again," he said. "But that is all right. Tom Merry is far enough away. They are not likely to find us."

"I suppose not."

"You're sorry?"

"Do you expect me to say that I'm glad?" said Ethel, looking at him.

"No, I suppose not. I should like you to be content to picnic with me, and go back to St. Jim's good friends."

"Nonsense!"

Lumley bit his lip.

"Very well; I don't care."

He glanced round ahead of the boat. The stream was widening, where it joined another, between well-wooded banks. In the distance rose a spire, and along one of the banks sprawled a quaint old village.

Ethel uttered an exclamation.

"I know this place!"

"What is it?" asked Lumley.

"That's the Ryll; we're floating into it."

"Then we're only a mile from St. Jim's."

"Yes."

Jerrold Lumley looked thoughtful for a moment.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Then there's a waterside inn only a short distance from here, where we can get a lunch-basket, and things for camping. We can picnic on the island. You've picnicked there before, I think, with Tom Merry and the rest."

"Yes."

"Then you will like it."

"I shall not picnic there with you."

"Won't you be reasonable?" said Lumley, in a low voice. "I don't want you to be hungry, Ethel, and it's no good being obstinate."

She did not reply

Lumley took up the oars again, and rowed on into the Ryll. Now as he was to the country, he recognised the banks of the familiar river now. He knew where he was, and he had decided what to do. Of the pursuers there was no sign. Tom Merry & Co. had been shaken off miles back.

There were currents and eddies where the stream ran into the Ryll, and it required all Lumley's care to look after the boat. As it rocked on the eddies, he glanced at Cousin Ethel. She was quite composed.

"My word," said Lumley, "you have a wonderful nerve for a girl! Can you swim?"

"Yes."

"But you would never reach the shore if anything happened to this boat," said Jerrold, "unless I saved you. I am a good swimmer."

"Indeed!"

"I could give points to some of those swanking bounders at St. Jim's, if I thought it worth while, I guess," said Lumley, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Perhaps I could show them something at footer, too, if I cared."

"But you do not play?" said Ethel, with some interest.

"It is not worth my while."

"Better worth while than some of your amusements, I should think," the girl could not help saying.

Lumley sneered.

"So they've told you tales about me?"

Ethel flushed.

"Certainly not. My friends are not likely to tell tales about anyone. But your actions are common talk at the school, and I have heard you speak yourself of smoking and card-playing."

"I guess I have to pass the time, you know," said Lumley carelessly. "You see, I'm no older in years than these fellows, but I'm older in other things. I was a man before I was a boy. When I was ten I had to fight for myself. I knew most things at eleven. At twelve there wasn't a sharper in New York who could have done me."

Ethel looked at him curiously.

"You have had a curious experience," she said.

"I guess so. I could interest you in some things, I think, if you cared to listen," said Jerrold. "I guess I've lived more in fifteen years than Blake or Tom Merry will live in fifty. But——"

He broke off.

"You wouldn't care to hear," he said, "and you would be horrified, too. I've had a hard life, and so has my governor, before Lumley's Limited 'got there.' We've been hit hard, and we've hit hard back, and some went under. I guess I've seen a man who was worth millions selling matches in Mulberry Street. It makes you think. St. Jim's is a change to me after all that."

"It must be."

"But you'll see that a fellow like me couldn't knuckle under to Tom Merry & Co.," said Jerrold. "I must be top dog."

"They would willingly be friends with you if—if——"

Lumley laughed.

"If I were different," he said. If I were a good little boy, and said 'Yes, sir,' and 'No, sir,' according to rule. I guess I shall never come to that."

"If you would be truthful, and fair, and kind," said Ethel steadily. "If you would play the game, as they would put it."

The Outsider nodded.

"I don't know," he said, "I might——" He paused. His eyes were fixed upon the Rylcombe mill, which the boat was now passing. "If that kid isn't careful," said Lumley, "she'll be in the water in two shakes, I guess."

Cousin Ethel looked round.

The mill-wheel was revolving steadily, and the water lashed and sang round the wheel. The murmur of it reached their ears in the boat.

A little girl was playing by the wooden fence a little distance above the mill. The fence was broken in one place, and the drop into the water below was unguarded, and the child was certainly in danger.

Ethel turned pale.

The child was placing her doll on the broken fence, trying to make it sit there, and at every instant Ethel expected to see her tumble into the river.

Lumley's expression was strange.

One so hard and reckless as the Outsider of St. Jim's, so utterly inconsiderate to others as a rule, might have been expected to row on without more than a careless glance at the child.

But the Outsider did not. He rested on his oars, his eyes fixed on the little girl, and the colour wavering in his cheeks.

"The little duffer!" he muttered. "Where are her parents? She'll be in the water, as sure as a gun!"

Ethel's lips trembled.

"Shall I call out to her?" said Lumley, looking at Ethel. "It might startle her, and——"

Ethel shook her head.

"No—— But—— Oh, good heavens!"

The catastrophe had come.

The doll slipped from the broken rail, and the child made a wild catch at it. She missed the doll, and the next moment was over the dizzy edge. The sharp, frightened cry, the quick splash, rang in Ethel's ears.

The girl half sprang towards Lumley.

"Save her!" she cried.

Lumley looked at Cousin Ethel.

His face was white.

"Save her!" he said. "I cannot save her! She'll be sucked under the mill-wheel and so should I be if I went in for her!"

Ethel clasped her hands.

"Oh, heaven! If Figgins were here! Oh——"

Lumley flushed crimson.

"Take the oars!" he said sharply. "Keep the boat off. I'll try."

He threw his jacket into the boat, and kicked off his boots.

"No, no!" cried Ethel. "She is lost! You cannot——"

Lumley did not listen.

A long, powerful spring carried him far into the water, and the next moment he was swimming with powerful strokes.

CHAPTER 12.

Jerrold Lumley — Hero.

COUSIN ETHEL stood in the boat as it rocked. Her face was as white as chalk, her eyes shining with fear. She was afraid for Jerrold Lumley as well as for the child. A woman had appeared on the bank, and was crying and wringing her hands.

"Save her—save her!"

A man in a white, floury coat came into view from the mill. It was Miller Giles, a fat and comfortable miller, well known to the boys of St. Jim's. But he did not look comfortable now. Miller Giles had lived by a river all his life, but he could not swim a stroke; and if he had gone into the water, he would have gone direct to the bottom, like a stone. That, however, would, perhaps, not have stopped him from plunging in to the rescue of his little daughter had not Lumley been first.

Lumley had reached the child.

As the current swept the little girl down towards the mill-wheel, Lumley, swimming from the boat, had intercepted her, and his grasp had closed upon the long, floating hair. The child was unconscious, and did not make a movement. Lumley secured a firm grip upon her, and swam for his life.

For his life—that was what it was now!

The current was sucking him towards the mill-wheel, and, once sucked under there, no power on earth could save him. The mere thought of it sent a cold shudder through his body.

He fought for his life, and the life of the little girl he held. Bravely, with steady courage, the Outsider of St. Jim's struggled with the current that sought to drag him to a horrible doom.

The water sang and bubbled round him—sang and bubbled, not with music to his ears, but like a chorus of

demons. The sun flashed in his eyes; the mill and the trees on the bank seemed to be swimming round him.

He was fighting hard, but he knew that he was getting the worst of it. The current was sucking him down to death under the wheel.

Without the dead weight that was dragging him down, Jerrold Lumley knew that he could save himself ere his strength was spent.

Save himself!

Why should he give his life for a stranger—he who had never helped a lame dog over a stile, never extended a helping hand to human being in distress, never cared whether anyone was in distress or not?

He could have laughed at himself, in the midst of the whirling, swirling waters.

What was it kept him from throwing aside his burden, and fighting for his own life? What was it? The thought of a scornful face that would look at him when he came back safe—alone; and the knowledge that Figgins would have died rather than let the child sink, if he had been there; and that Cousin Ethel knew that.

What did it matter to the Outsider of St. Jim's if Cousin Ethel despised him?

It mattered enough to make Jerrold Lumley cling to the unconscious child, while the whirling waters dragged him to death.

But it was not to death that Lumley was to go. He had left the girl in the boat, and Cousin Ethel had not been idle.

The miller shouted to her, and, with a few strokes, she brought the boat near enough for Giles to jump in.

The miller seized the oars, and the boat sped to the rescue. In the water Giles would have been helpless, but in the boat he was the right man in the right place.

Lumley could hear now the grim grinding of the wheel in his dizzy ears.

He had given himself up for lost! Still, he clung to the child.

But a rough, white face bent over him, blotting out the sky, and a hand grasped him, and he was dragged with the child into the boat.

"God bless you, lad!" a husky voice muttered.

That was the last Jerrold Lumley heard or knew. Darkness descended upon him.

Consciousness struggled back, and it seemed to Jerrold Lumley that he was still fighting in the whirling waters; that the mill-wheel was dragging him down, down, down to death!

Now he was under the wheel—grinding, grinding, with a horrible clatter; now he cried out aloud, and came to his senses. He was lying on a sofa in a room of the mill, the water dripping round him from his drenched clothing, the sun shining upon him through a window.

The miller was on one side of him, Cousin Ethel on the other. There were tears on Cousin Ethel's cheeks. Lumley felt a taste of brandy in his mouth. It was not a strange taste to the reckless blackguard of St. Jim's.

Lumley started up.

"What—what—— Where am I, then? I—I thought I was under the mill! I—I thought——" He broke off.

"Thank the good Lord you're not, my lad!" said the miller, with tears in his eyes. "My word, I thought you were gone for good! God bless you!"

"Where is she?"

"The child? Safe with her mother, thanks to you, young master!"

Lumley had not meant the child. He was thinking of Cousin Ethel.

The girl laid her hand on his, and he looked at her.

"You're safe," he muttered—"you're safe! After I jumped from the boat I was afraid—afraid it might drift on the wheel, and—— But you're all right!"

Ethel's tears fell.

Lumley grinned through the wet on his face. He had been through a terrible experience, but already he was recovering. He was the rough-natured, hardened Outsider of St. Jim's again almost.

"You are crying?" he exclaimed.

"No," said Ethel. "Yes. I—I——"

"Did you think I was drowned?"

"No. But——"

"Would you have cried if I had been?" asked Lumley.

"Yes, indeed!"

"Why?"

Ethel did not answer that question. She wiped away her tears. The heroism of the Outsider had touched her strangely.

"I say, I'm sorry," said Lumley, after a pause. The miller, satisfied that he was all right, had gone into the adjoining room, where the mother was trying to restore the child. "It was a cad's trick to carry you off like that. I only wanted to score over Tom Merry and Figgins; but it was rotten! I'm sorry."

"That is all right," said Ethel.

"You don't bear any malice?"

"Indeed—no!"

"Because I fished that little duffer out, do you mean?" asked Lumley, with a grin. "That's a curious reason; it has nothing to do with it, you know."

"Because you are brave and noble," said Ethel, in a low voice; "because you are not all bad, as I thought you were; because I admire you."

Lumley stared.

"I guess you're joking," he remarked.

"I am not."

"Brave and noble! My hat!"

Ethel smiled. It had never occurred to Lumley that his action was either brave or noble. And Lumley had one virtue—he had no humbug about him.

"I think it was brave and noble," said Ethel.

"Oh, you're off the mark!" said Jerrold coolly. "I don't want to strut in borrowed plumes, you know. It wasn't noble. I suppose it was rather brave, when you come to think of it, though I never thought of that at the time; but anybody who knows me will tell you I've got grit. My hat! I needed it in the old days, too. But don't you make any mistake; I didn't go into the water from any noble motive."

"You went in to save the child," said Ethel.

"I guess so. But I didn't care a Continental red cent for the child, or what became of it!" said Lumley, with brutal frankness. "The brat was nothing to me. Do you think I would risk my life for a stranger's kid?"

Ethel looked at him.

"Then why did you do it?" she asked.

"Because I was an ass!" said Lumley, with a grin. "I held on to the kid because—because—— Oh, you'll laugh!"

"I shall not laugh, Lumley."

"Well, I jumped in, and I held on to the kid, while I knew I was a gone coon if I didn't let go, because—because"—he laughed scoffingly—"because I knew that Tom Merry or Figgins would have done it, and—and I wouldn't do less than they'd do, with you looking on. That's all, and the solid truth!"

Ethel was silent for a minute.

"Well," said the Outsider, "now you know how noble it was. It was dead mean; like everything I do, Ethel! I'm a rank outsider, you know—the blackguard of the Lower School; no good in me. The Head would kick me out if he could; the fellows would all like to send me to Coventry. And I don't care a red cent for the lot of them if they do! I guess I can stand alone anywhere. And I've treated you like a cad, Ethel. And now I'm on my back here, and can't move for a bit, now's your chance to cut."

"What do you mean?"

He made a gesture towards the door. He was utterly exhausted, and that gesture alone made him sink back with a swimming head.

"Keep still," said Ethel. "You must not move."

He grinned.

"Why don't you cut?"

"Cut?"

"Yes," said Lumley, with a sneer. "There's the door, and I'm as weak as a rat—I can't stop you. Now's your chance. You can get away. It's only ten minutes' walk by the short cut to Wayland. Now's your chance."

Ethel did not stir.

"Why don't you go?" he asked. "Why?"

"I shall not leave you till you are quite strong," said Ethel quietly.

He looked at her grimly.

"When I am strong I shall not let you go."

She smiled.

"We will talk about that then," she said.

"I mean it," said Lumley.

CHAPTER 13.

Honour.

THE miller and the miller's wife were all gratitude to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. Whatever his motives may have been, as he explained them to Ethel and to himself, all the miller knew or cared about was that Lumley had risked, and nearly lost his life, to save the little girl, and had saved her.

That was enough for Mr. Giles and his wife.

The mother wept tears of joy and gratitude over Lumley, and, in fact, put his politeness to a very great strain by her emotion, which the hardened lad did not understand.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed at last. "If the kid's safe, I'm glad. And if you can dry my clothes for me, I'll take it kindly. But that's enough. I'm not a hero, and I

wouldn't be one at any price, and I guess I don't want any scene."

And Mrs. Giles made no more scene, but she attributed Jerrold's rudeness to his modesty, and perhaps thought the better of him for it.

Jerrold was taken to the miller's room to change his clothes, and he came down in a suit of clothes belonging to Mr. Giles, while his own were being dried. He looked odd enough in them, too, and Cousin Ethel could not help smiling.

Jerrold grinned awkwardly.

"I know I look a blessed guy," he remarked.

"I am glad you have not caught cold," said Ethel.

The junior laughed.

"Just like a girl, to think of that," he said. "I never catch cold. I'm as tough as nails—hard all through. They say my clothes will be at least an hour before I can put them on again. It's rotten."

"You must wait."

"And you," said Jerrold.

Ethel smiled.

"You are quite yourself again now," she said. "You have quite recovered."

"I guess so. And you remember what I said? You're not going."

"Suppose I speak to Mr. Giles?"

Jerrold gave her a dark glance.

"You've got me, I guess," he said. "What a fool I was to jump in for that kid! What a double-distilled fool! I'm done now—clean done. You can go back to St. Jim's, and they'll laugh at me."

He clenched his hand.

"I shall not go back to St. Jim's," said Ethel. "I have no intention of speaking to Mr. Giles, either. I shall tell him nothing."

"And you will stay?"

"Yes."

"I guess I don't catch on," said Jerrold.

"After what you have done——"

"Oh, leave that out of it," said Lumley. "I've told you my motives. I never was a humbug. Don't make me one."

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"I cannot leave that out of it," she said, "and I will not. And I think your motives were nobler than you suppose yourself. You wanted me to picnic with you—to have tea before we returned to St. Jim's, and to go back good friends."

"Yes."

"Well, if you still wish it——"

"Of course I do," said Lumley eagerly.

"Let it be so, then."

"You mean it?"

"Certainly."

"Honour?"

"Honour!" said Cousin Ethel, laughing.

"Hark!" exclaimed Jerrold, holding up his hand.

There was a sound of oars in the river, floating in the still afternoon, clear over the grind of the mill-wheel.

Jerrold stepped to the open window.

Out of the stream a boat was in sight—a large boat, with six St. Jim's juniors in it. Ethel and the Outsider recognised Figgins, and Kerr, and Blake, and Tom Merry, and Lowther, and Kangaroo. The others were not to be seen.

What had happened was easily guessed. The chums of St. Jim's had obtained the boat, and these six had followed the chase by water, while the others took charge of the cycles.

The faint sound of their voices came to the ears of the two in the mill, though what they said could not be heard.

Jerrold looked at Ethel.

One call from the girl would have brought the juniors to the mill, and she would have been rid of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

But after what she had said——

The girl compressed her lips.

There were her friends searching for her, but she was bound in honour now not to betray Jerrold Lumley. She had to let them pass.

Cousin Ethel turned from the window. Jerrold turned, too, and there was a curious expression upon his face.

"You keep your word," he remarked.

"Did you think I should break it?"

He mused.

"I have broken mine," he said, "many a time. I was never taught to look on a promise as sacred."

"You were very badly taught then."

"I guess so. And you always keep your word?"

"Always."

"You have never broken one?"

"Never!"

"I guess that's real nice," said the Outsider. And his face remained very thoughtful for some time afterwards.

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CHAPTER 14.

Something Like a Surprise.

"LOOK here——"

"Weally, Dig——"

"I tell you——"

"Weally——"

"Stop, you chump!"

"I wefuse to be called a chump!"

"Fathead, then!" said Digby emphatically. His voice had been growing more emphatic for some time. "Waster! Ass! Frabjous ass!"

"Weally, Dig——"

"We've done Wayland," said Digby. "We haven't heard anything of them there. My idea is to go up the river."

"And my ideah is to go down."

"Ass!"

"Duffah!"

And D'Arcy and Digby held their bicycles, and stared at one another and frowned. They had dismounted on the bank of the Ryll, within sight of the mill.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had changed his clothes at St. Jim's, and then set out on the track of Tom Merry & Co. He was very exasperated at being left behind, being under the impression that he had changed in record time, whereas, as a matter of fact, the change had occupied a quarter of an hour at least.

The swell of St. Jim's had met Digby on the road, and stopped to help him mend his puncture. Mellish had passed them while they were so engaged, and from him they had learned that Lumley was gone to Wayland.

When Dig's bike was in order again, they had started off for Wayland. Mellish's information might or might not be correct; but in any case, it was too late to think of overtaking Tom Merry & Co.

They rode to Wayland and looked for Lumley there; but no one, of course, had seen anything of the trap, which was in quite a different direction. Then they rode down to the river, thinking that Lumley might have taken that direction, and at the point where the upper stream joined the Ryll they had stopped. D'Arcy was of opinion that if Lumley had come in that direction, he would have gone down the river towards St. Jim's, and Dig thought that the Outsider would have done exactly the opposite. So they argued it out, not very politely.

"You see," said Dig, "he would want to keep away from the school."

"On the contwawy, deah boy," said D'Arcy, "he would double back towards the school, you know, so as to thwow us off the twack."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Dig——"

"He would keep as far off St. Jim's as he could."

"Wubbish!"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I am assuahed that the wascal has gone down the wivah."

"If he's been here at all, he's gone up."

"Vewy well, I will go down, and you shall go up," said Arthur Augustus. "It wouldn't be safe for you to meet him alone, but you're not likely to, in that diwection."

"You're not likely to, or I'd come with you," said Dig.

"I should not need your assistance, deah boy. Now, which way are you goin'?"

"Up the river."

"Pway listen to weason——"

"Rats!"

"I insist——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I should be sowwy to have to thwash you before we part, Dig——"

Digby laughed.

"Oh, buzz off, Gussy! We'll compare notes at St. Jim's. I don't suppose either of us will find the bounder."

"Vewy well, deah boy. Good-bye!"

And Digby rode up the towing-path. D'Arcy wheeled his bicycle along the bank, in a thoughtful mood. He was nearer to the fugitive than he imagined, but he was not in the least on the track. He glanced at the mill, and paused.

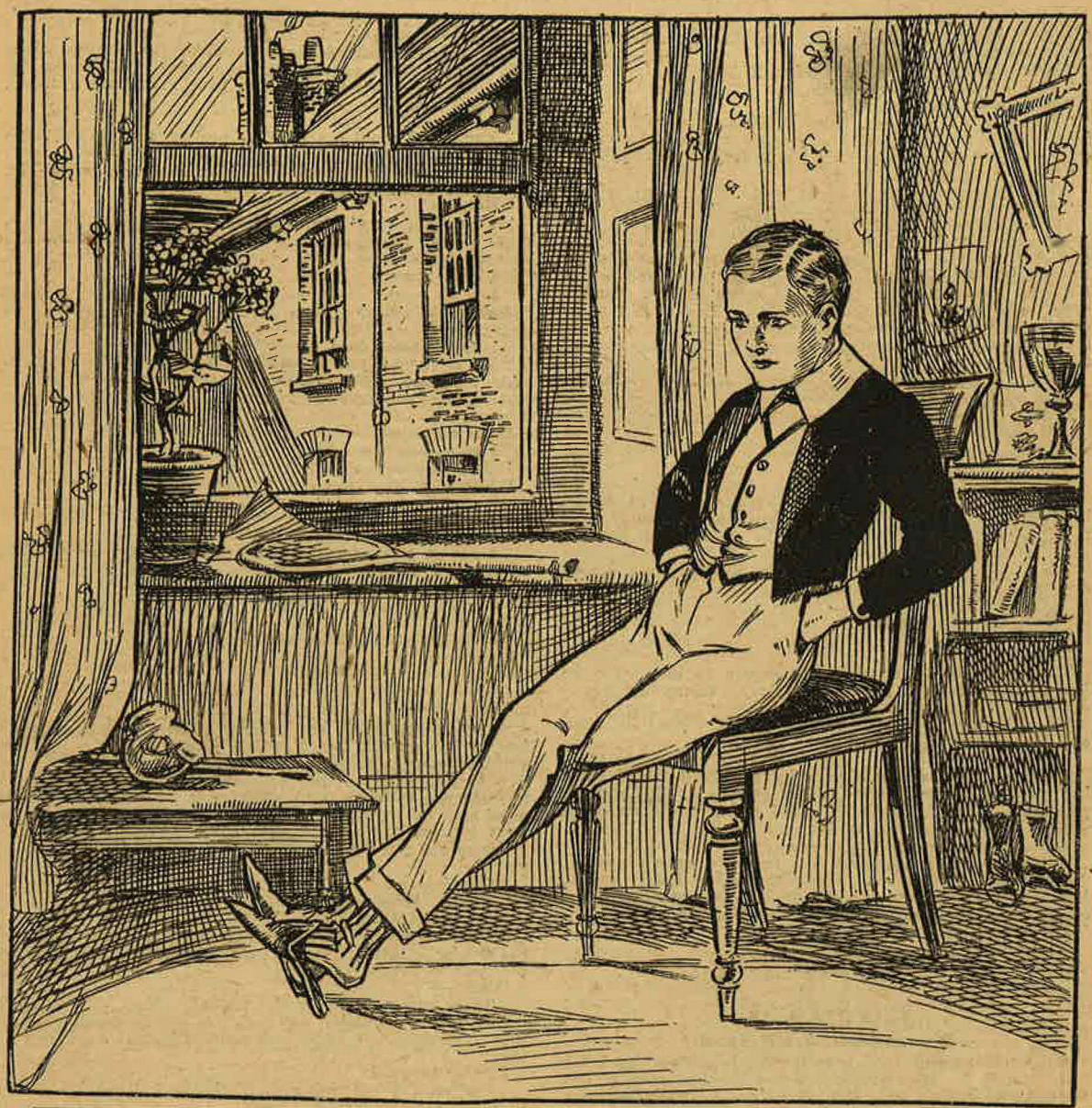
"Bai Jove! Pewwaps Millah Giles may have seen somethin' of the twap!" he murmured. "No harm in askin', at any wate."

And Arthur Augustus wheeled his machine up to the mill. He rang his bell as he came up, and the miller came out. He knew D'Arcy of St. Jim's very well.

"Good-afternoon, Master D'Arcy!" he said.

"Good-afteahnoon, Giles!" said the swell of St. Jim's, raising his cap gracefully to the miller's wife, who was looking out. "I am lookin' for a chap. Pewwaps you have seen him."

"Perhaps," said the miller



As the Outsider sat alone in his study, with dizzy brain and aching head, it was not his bruises, his aches, that troubled him most—for he was thinking of the chance he had had that day of gaining the regard of Cousin Ethel—the chance he had had of winning her respect—and how he had, with the caddishness that seemed inherent in his nature, thrown that chance away. The girl had been growing to trust him, and he had lost her trust. The chance was gone. *(See page 23.)*

"Has a chap in a twap passed this way?" asked D'Arcy.

"I have not noticed one."

"A wotten-looking chap," said D'Arcy. "A mean, cwawlin' wottah, with a face like a—a—a pwizefighter, you know, and a wotten, wuffianly expwession. The kind of chap who looks capable of pushin' a fellow into a ditch and wuinin' his clothes."

The miller smiled.

"I haven't seen him."

"He may have left the twap somewhah," D'Arcy remarked thoughtfully. "He would have a gal with him, vewy pwobably."

"I'm sorry I haven't seen him. Will you come in and rest?" asked the miller. "There's a young gentleman belonging to St. Jim's here now."

"Bai Jove! Who is it?"

"I don't know his name," said Mr. Giles; "but he's a splendid chap—one of the best. He jumped into the river to save my little Alice, and was nearly sucked under the mill-wheel."

"Bai Jove! It must be a School House chap," said D'Arcy.

The miller laughed. He knew of the rivalry between the houses at St. Jim's, as everybody round the school did. It certainly seemed humorous to him that D'Arcy should conclude, as a matter of course, that the heroic rescuer was a School House fellow.

"I don't know about that, Master D'Arcy," he said. "I only know he's a splendid lad, and as brave as a lion."

"Blake, vewy likely."

"No, it's not Master Blake. It's a lad I haven't seen before," said the miller. "I think he's a new boy."

D'Arcy looked puzzled.

"Bai Jove! The only new boy lately is that wank outsidah Lumley, the chap I'm lookin' for," he remarked.

"Will you come in?"

"Yaas, wathah! I'd like to see this chap."

Arthur Augustus leant his bicycle against a tree, and followed the miller in. He was puzzled by what Mr. Giles had told him. Not for an instant did he connect the rescuer of little Alice in his mind with the Outsider. That was too wildly improbable to be thought of.

But he could not guess whom it might be. Any one of the chums of the School House might have acted so; but

Mr. Giles knew them all by sight, and this was a fellow the miller did not know.

"Is he a juniah, Mr. Giles?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes; no older than yourself, sir."

"Bai Jove! Was he hurt?"

"No, luckily," said Mr. Giles. "He's only waiting here for his clothes to dry, and I've given him some of mine to wear while they're drying. The young lady is waiting, too."

"The young lady?"

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

"So there was a lady with him?"

The miller paused, and looked at D'Arcy. He knew that Ethel was D'Arcy's cousin, and D'Arcy's ignorance of the fact that she was with Lumley seemed to point to a secret being kept. Mr. Giles was a good-natured man, and he did not want to put his foot in it if he could help it. But he reflected at once that Ethel was not the kind of girl to be making secret excursions with anyone, and she was not likely to object to her cousin knowing that she was at the mill.

"Yes, it was your cousin, Master D'Arcy," said the miller, having come to this conclusion.

D'Arcy jumped.

"My cousin!"

"Yes."

"Cousin Ethel?"

"Certainly."

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and stared blankly at the miller, who had his hand now on the door of the little sitting-room overlooking the river, where Lumley and Cousin Ethel were sitting.

"You are jokin', I suppose, Mr. Giles?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Certainly not."

"But—but my cousin——"

"She is here."

"Imposs.!"

The miller looked flurried. He began to think that he had put his foot in it after all. D'Arcy's amazement was so extreme.

"And she was with the chap who fished your little gal out, Mr. Giles?" asked D'Arcy, in surprise.

"Yes."

"Then one of our chaps must have found her and taken her away fwom that wottah," said D'Arcy. "But you say you don't know the chap? Then I fail to undahstand the mattah at all. You had bettah show me in."

The miller opened the door, and D'Arcy walked in.

Two figures turned towards him from the open window.

One was Cousin Ethel. The other was a lad in clothes half a dozen sizes too large for him—a ludicrous figure enough—but his face the swell of St. Jim's knew well.

He uttered a cry of amazement.

"Lumley!"

Cousin Ethel caught her breath.

"Arthur! You here!"

CHAPTER 15.

D'Arcy Considers It Spoof.

JERROLD stood looking at D'Arcy in silence, his hands clenched. He had believed that he had thrown Tom Merry & Co. completely off the track. They had been left behind up the river, and most of them had passed in the boat, and disappeared towards the school. And he remembered that he had not seen Arthur Augustus among the pursuers at all. The swell of St. Jim's was the one he feared least. But it was the one he had feared the least who had found him.

Arthur Augustus stared at Lumley in blank amazement. He was too astonished to find Lumley there to be able to speak.

"That's him!" said the miller, behind. "That's the chap who pulled my little girl out of the river. That's the young gentleman, Master D'Arcy. And I can never say how thankful I am to him."

"What!"

The miller closed the door, and left them.

Ethel made a step towards her cousin.

She was in an embarrassing position enough, and the colour was burning in her cheeks now.

"Arthur!"

"Ethel! I've found you, then?"

"It seems so."

"And I've found this waseal," said Arthur Augustus, clenching his hands as he turned toward the Outsider of St. Jim's. "I don't know how you got here, Ethel, deah gal, but I'm glad I've found you. Will you pway step into the next woom for a few minutes while I speak to Lumley?"

"No."

"Ethel——"

"You do not understand, Arthur——"

"I quite undahstand that you object to violence, deah gal," said Arthur Augustus gently enough, "but under the cires. I have no wesource but to give this uttah wottah a feahful thwashin'."

"Arthur——"

"You see, I could ovahlook his pushin' me into the ditch in that tweachewous, cowardly way," said D'Arcy, "but I could not possibly pardon such an affwont as cawwyin' off my cousin undah my eyes."

"But——"

"I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'. Pewwaps, upon the whole, you had bettah wemain here, Ethel, and Lumley will step outside with me."

"I tell you——"

"It's all wight, deah gal. I sha'n't be hurt. I have licked that wottah before, and I can do it again quite easily."

"I do not mean that. I——"

"My deah gal, gals should not take any notice of these little mattahs," said D'Arcy soothingly. "It's all wight. Lumley, will you have the kindness to step outside the house with me?"

Lumley grinned.

"I guess not," he said.

D'Arcy coloured with anger.

"You wefuse to meet me?"

"Just so."

"You uttah wottah! You are a coward!"

Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"You are a wottah! A wastah! You are a cowardly worm! I wegard you with feahful contempt!"

"Oh, pile it on!" said Lumley.

"I wegard you as a tweachewous, cowardly beast!"

"Go it."

"Will you step outside with me?"

"I guess not."

"Wottah!"

"Keep it up."

"Arthur——"

"Excuse me, Ethel, but I cannot allow even you to interfere in this mattah," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I am goin' to give Lumley a feahful thwashin'. He wefuses to step outside with me, like the wotten worm he is. I must twouble you to leave the wottah to me, Ethel. Would you mind steppin' outside?"

"I will not."

"Only for a few minutes, Ethel, deah boy—I mean, deah gal."

"Certainly not."

"Weally, Ethel——"

"Let me explain, Arthur."

"The mattah needs no explaining," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I have found the scoundwel, and it only wemains to thwash him."

"But——"

"There are no buts in the mattah. Now, Ethel, pway leave us alone. Lumley, you cad, you are an uttahah wottah than I thought you, to sheltah yourself behind a gal in this way."

Lumley laughed.

"I guess I'm not doing that," he said, "but I'm ready to face the music at St. Jim's. I'm not taking any till then."

"You will take a thwashin' now."

"Go ahead!"

"I cannot thwash you in the pwesence of a lady, as you know perfectly well," the swell of St. Jim's exclaimed, in a tone of great exasperation.

"Then you had better put it off for a bit, I guess."

D'Arcy breathed hard through his nose. Cousin Ethel laid her hand gently upon his arm.

"Arthur, will you listen to me?"

"Certainly, deah gal."

"You must not touch Lumley."

"Weally, Ethel——"

"He has been very brave. He has done wrong, but—but I have forgiven him," said Ethel quietly.

"That's all vewy well, Ethel, and I will forgive him when I have given him a thwashin'!" said Arthur Augustus. "Not before, of course."

"You must let him alone, Arthur, and ask Tom Merry and the others to do so. He risked his life to save the miller's little girl."

"Oh, cheese that, please!" said Lumley abruptly. "I don't want to be bagged off, and I tell you——"

D'Arcy glared at the Outsider.

"I will thank you not to intewwupt my cousin, Lumley," he said.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"You uttah wottah——"

"Arthur, be quiet. I have told you——"

"My deah gal, he's taken you in," said Arthur Augustus, with a smile of superior wisdom. "Why, that chap nevah plays cwicket or footah, and he tells lies, and smokes, and dwinks bwandy. He is an uttah wottah fwom top to toe. He hasn't saved anybody's life. I weally cannot swallow that, you know. He has been spoofin' you, my deah gal!"

Ethel coloured.

"I tell you, I saw it, Arthur!"

D'Arcy shook his head, in a way that was really a little irritating. When D'Arcy was riding the high horse, he could be irritating.

"My deah gal, he's an awf'ly deep and cunnin' wottah," he said. "I dare say he got up some scene for you, but he was spoofin'."

"It is not like you, Arthur, to belittle what another fellow has done," said Ethel reproachfully.

"Not if he was a decent chap," said Arthur Augustus. "I'll give cwedit where cwedit is due, Ethel. That chap nevah did a decent thing in his life, I believe. He was spoofin' you all the time, and the millah, too. Weren't you, you scoundwel?"

Lumley nodded.

"Exactly," he said.

"There you are, Ethel—he owns up."

"He is only speaking so because you provoked him, Arthur," said Ethel. "You must believe what I tell you. I saw it myself."

"Spoof, my deah gal—spoof!"

"Arthur!"

"I am sowwy to have to disagwee in opinion with a lady, Ethel," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "But I hold to the opinion that it was all spoof."

"You will make me angry, Arthur."

"I am vewy sowwy, but I cannot be imposed upon by that wascal, and I weally cannot let you be imposed upon, Ethel. Will you have the extweme goodness to wetire fwom the scene while I settle mattahs with Lumley?"

"Certainly not!"

D'Arcy looked helpless.

"But you ought to do as I say," he murmured feebly. "Gals ought always to do as their bwothahs and cousins tell them, you know."

"Nonsense."

"Eh?"

"Yes, nonsense, Arthur. Now, it was very good of you to look for me——"

"Not at all, Ethel; it was my dutay as your cousin!"

"And to find me——"

"There was weally a gweat deal of luck about that."

"But since Lumley has rescued the miller's little girl ——"

"Spoof, my dear gal—spoof!"

Ethel's eyes gleamed for a moment. As she had said, Arthur Augustus was within measurable distance of making her angry.

"Since that," said Ethel, "I have forgiven Lumley for his rudeness to me."

"Weally, Ethel——"

"And I do not want him to be punished in any way——"

"Weally——"

"Now, Arthur——"

"But, my dear gal——"

"I tell you——"

"But I must point out——"

"Arthur——"

"Ethel——"

"Really, Arthur, I must ask you not to threaten Lumley any more——"

"N-n-not to threaten Lumley any more!" murmured the astounded swell of St. Jim's.

"Exactly."

"But I am goin' to thwash him."

"Nothing of the sort."

"Pewwaps," said D'Arcy, with heavy sarcasm—"pewwaps, Ethel, you would pwefer me to wetire and leave you with that boundah."

Ethel nodded.

"That would be best, Arthur."

D'Arcy jumped.

"Ethel!"

"It would be quite the best thing to do, under the circumstances."

"You are jokin', of course—though weally this is not a time to joke."

"I am not joking."

"But you don't mean——"

"Yes, I do."

"But——"

"Surely you can trust me to know best what to do, Arthur!" said Ethel, laying her hand on her cousin's shoulder with her most winning smile.

"Well, I know you're a keenah chap—I mean gal—than I am," said D'Arcy. "But—but I don't quite see——"

"It is all right."

"Oh, vewy well! If you wish me to wetire, I twust I shall nevah oppose the wishes of a lady, even of one natuwally undah my authowity as my cousin," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "I will wetire. But, wemembah, Ethel, I don't believe in that wascally boundah the least bit. I considah it all spoof."

And Arthur Augustus, with his aristocratic nose very high in the air, retired from the room, and went back to his bicycle in quite a dazed frame of mind.

CHAPTER 16.

A Chance Thrown Away.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY looked curiously at Cousin Ethel as D'Arcy retired. The Outsider of St. Jim's wore a very odd expression upon his face. He did not understand girls—at least, girls like Ethel—and he did not follow the workings of her mind at all.

Ethel smiled.

"Poor Arthur!" she said. "He does not understand."

"No," said Lumley.

"But—but you must excuse him for not believing in you," said Ethel. "You will admit that you have not acted in a way to raise his opinion of you."

Lumley laughed.

"Quite so."

The miller put his head in at the door.

"The clothes are quite dry now, sir."

"Thank you!" said Lumley.

He went to the miller's room to change back into his own clothes. In a quarter of an hour he reappeared. Ethel was waiting.

"You are ready?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And you will really come?"

"Of course."

"And picnic with me?" pursued Lumley.

Ethel looked at her watch.

"We shall have to make it a very short picnic, then," she said. "I must get to the school, you know."

"Very well. I promised to take you back to the school by five o'clock," said Lumley. "We will stop at the riverside inn for tea, and go straight on to the school. Then we shall not be so very late."

"That will be very nice."

They went down to the boat.

The miller and his wife overwhelmed Lumley with thanks again as he stepped into the boat, to all of which the junior listened with a bored expression upon his face.

He put out the oars, and the boat glided down the river.

Ethel took the rudder-lines.

She was in a very curious position, and she felt it. A thought was in her mind that what had happened might have a good effect upon the Outsider. The fellow who had dared to risk his life must have good elements in his nature.

But she did not know the Outsider well yet.

The boat glided down the river, in the direction Tom Merry & Co. had gone in an hour before.

The quaint, old-fashioned inn of the water-side, with its terrace looking on the river, rose into view among the trees.

Lumley brought the boat towards the bank.

"Here's our place," he said.

Ethel nodded.

Now that she was fairly committed to having tea with the Outsider, she felt a little chilling doubt in her mind.

But it was too late to think of retreat now.

Lumley moored the boat, and gave Ethel his hand ashore, and they went on the terrace. There, at one of the little tables, Lumley ordered tea.

Lumley's orders were lavish; he had unlimited pocket-money, and he always gave himself the best of everything. He wanted to give Ethel the best, too. But the resources of the inn were not needed for Ethel.

She would take nothing but tea and a little bread-and-butter, and it was in vain that the Outsider urged her.

She simply would not allow him to expend money upon her; she had forgiven him for what he had done, but she would go no further.

Lumley bit his lip a little.

As we have said, he did not understand girls, and if Cousin Ethel had sent Arthur Augustus away, and come with him, he could not see why they should not have what he regarded as a really good time.

What did the girl mean?

Was it merely nonsense on her part, designed to irritate him, and so keep up his interest?

If Ethel had known that that thought was in the Outsider's mind, she would have risen from her seat and left him on the instant.

But she did not know.

She was anxious for the ordeal—for such it was to her—to be over, and she wanted to get to St. Jim's. Unless Arthur Augustus had fallen in with Tom Merry & Co., they were probably still searching for her, and she disliked to think of their wasting their time in that manner.

She made a gesture at last.

Lumley looked at her.

"You are anxious to go?" he asked.

Ethel nodded.

"Yes; I should like to get to the school."

"A couple of hours is enough of my society, I suppose?" he remarked, with a grin. "It is nearly three since I took you from D'Arcy in Rylcombe Lane."

"I ought to get in."

"Very well; here's the boat."

Lumley placed her in the boat, took the oars, and pulled away slowly towards St. Jim's. The Outsider did not know whether to be satisfied in his mind or not. He had certainly scored over Tom Merry & Co., as he had purposed, and for the consequences—certain to come—he did not care a straw.

But——

Well, after all, it was better to have Cousin Ethel contented to be with him, than to have her sitting silent and angry and resentful.

He looked at her as she sat in the stern of the boat.

The girl looked very pretty and very sweet, and there was a gentle expression on her face which had not been there before the incident at the mill.

Lumley wondered what she was thinking of.

She caught his glance, and coloured a little.

"Are your thoughts a secret?" asked Lumley, smiling.

She smiled too.

"No, not at all. I was thinking of you."

"Of me!"

"Yes. I was thinking that a boy capable of such an act of bravery——"

"Oh, no more of that, please!"

"Capable of such an act of bravery," went on Ethel calmly; "I was thinking that it was a pity such a boy should not be truer to his better nature—more worthy of his courage. If you chose——"

Lumley laughed lightly.

"If I chose I could become a model like Tom Merry or Figgins," he remarked.

"You could become a nice and kind-natured boy like Tom Merry or Figgins," said Cousin Ethel.

He yawned.

"That's not my ambition. Perhaps I could—perhaps I couldn't. But I don't feel any ambition in that direction."

"It is a pity."

"I guess not. I'm very well as I am. And won't you ever like me unless I become more like Tom Merry and Figgins?"

Ethel was silent.

The boat glided on, and Lumley brought it to the bank under a clump of willows some distance from the St. Jim's landing-place.

He jumped ashore, and helped Ethel out.

"We can walk through the trees to the school," he said, as they stood under the deep shadow of the drooping branches.

"Very well," said Ethel.

"But perhaps you would rather say good-bye to me here, and go into the school alone," Lumley suggested.

"I do not care."

"You do not care if the fellows passed remarks about your coming in with me?"

Ethel's head was very erect.

"Not in the least."

"Ah, I like you," said Lumley. "Do you know, I think you must like me a little—although I'm not at all like Figgins or Tom Merry—or you wouldn't have been so kind to me the last hour."

The girl moved away a pace. There was something in the Outsider's manner she did not like; an indefinable something in his tone. It struck her that after all, perhaps, she had acted unwisely; the Outsider was not the kind of boy to understand her finer motives.

He came nearer to her. With a sudden movement he took both her hands in his, and held them tightly.

Ethel drew a quick breath.

"Good-bye—good-bye!" she said quickly.

He did not release her hands, but stood looking in her eyes with a peculiar expression in his own.

"Don't hurry away," he said.

She tried to drag her hands away.

"Let me go!" she exclaimed.

"In a moment!. But——"

"Let me go!"

"Come, come," said Lumley, with a smile. "No acting, you know."

"What!"

He laughed.

"Come, come, Ethel. We've had a very pleasant afternoon, now, haven't we? Before we part, won't you give me one—just one—one little friendly salute?"

Ethel panted.

"You—you cad!" she said, in tense tones. "How silly I was to think for a moment you would ever understand anything—ever look upon anything as a decent boy would. You cad! Let me go, or I'll call for help!"

Lumley, in his surprise, relaxed his hold, and she tore her hands away and ran quickly through the trees.

He made a motion to follow, and then paused. She was gone. Lumley turned back towards the boat, a strange expression upon his face.

CHAPTER 17.

In Honour Bound.

"COUSIN ETHEL!"

"Ethel!"

"At last!"

The girl ran out of the trees, still crimson with exertion, and breathing tremulously.

She almost ran into Tom Merry & Co.

They looked at her, and Figgins ran forward, almost unconsciously taking her hand. She caught his arm, and stood breathing hard, her colour coming and going.

"Ethel! What is the matter? Has that cad dared——"

Figgins broke off.

Ethel recovered herself almost in a moment. She had all a nice, well-bred girl's horror of making any kind of a scene.

"It is nothing," she said. "I have been running, that is all. Is Arthur here?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass curiously upon his cousin. "I met Tom Mewwy and the west some time back, and weported to them that you had decided to wemain with that wottah, Ethel."

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Cheese it!"

"I wefuse——"

Ethel smiled at the juniors.

"I am all right," she said. "I have been running. Lumley put me ashore by the willows, and I came through the wood."

"That's all, then?" said Figgins, in great relief.

Ethel blushed. It occurred to her that if she said that that was all, it would be perilously near an untruth. But if she said that Lumley had frightened her, it would be very bad for Lumley.

"N-n-no," she murmured. "That is not all. But—but it is all right. I have not been hurt."

The juniors exchanged significant glances.

If Ethel said she had not been hurt, it was the truth, but they had no doubt that Lumley had been guilty of some rudeness, as on a previous occasion.

And their looks spoke volumes of what they could not say before the girl. They meant to make the Outsider of St. Jim's smart for it.

"I am so sowwy, Ethel," said D'Arcy gently, without specifying exactly what he was sorry for. "But weally I wanted to take you away fwom that boundah, you know, and you would not let me."

"It is all right, Arthur."

"I felt that I could not oppose your wishes, deah gal, though weally Lowthah has been tellin' me I was an ass not to slog the Outsidah on the spot."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Monty Lowther.

"It is all right now," said Ethel. "I must go to the school. Mrs. Holmes will be wondering what has become of me."

The juniors gathered round Cousin Ethel like a bodyguard. They walked to the school with serious faces. Ethel wished to speak, but for some time she could not decide what to say. It was not till they had nearly reached the School House that she found words to say.

She looked uneasily at the juniors.

"I want you to do me a favour," she said.

"Anythin', deah gal."

"Of course," said half a dozen voices. "You've only to say, Cousin Ethel."

"You are sure you mean that?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Quite sure."

"Honour bright!"

"Very well, then. You are thinking of punishing Jerrold Lumley for his action this afternoon," said Ethel.

Tom Merry & Co. were silent.

They certainly were thinking of that, but they didn't want to go into details before Ethel.

The girl looked directly at them.

"Well," said Tom Merry at last cautiously—"well, you see, he's acted like an awfully rotten cad."

"A weally wank outsidah, you know, Ethel."

Cousin Ethel shook her head.

"You must not touch him," she said.

"Oh!" exclaimed Herries. "Really, you know——"

"Draw it mild," murmured Digby.

Ethel's look was firm.

"That is the favour I want to ask. You must all promise not to touch Lumley for what he has done—each of you."

The juniors looked dumbfounded.

They were at a loss for words; and Cousin Ethel pursued:

"You think it curious I should ask this, as the injured party. Lumley treated me very foolishly and rudely, and I know he ought to be punished. I dislike him very much—more now than ever before. I do not think I can ever bear to see him again, if I can help it. But—but I do not want him to be punished."

Tom Merry appeared to gulp something down.

"Then we agree," he said.

"I know I can trust you," said Cousin Ethel. "Not one of you will lay a hand on him. I have your promise?"

"Honour bright!"

"Thank you so much!"

And Ethel, with a grateful smile to the juniors, went into the Head's house.

CHAPTER 18.

Lumley Has to Face the Music.

COUSIN ETHEL did not see very much of Tom Merry & Co. that visit, for the afternoon was now gone. But presently she had tea in Tom Merry's study, and it was a very pleasant meal. One thing only was weighing on the juniors' spirits—the fact that their promise bound them, and they could not touch Jerrold Lumley. The Outsider of St. Jim's was to escape scot-free after all he had done.

When Cousin Ethel departed the juniors saw her off, and they walked back to the school in a gloomy group. They longed to make Lumley pay for what he had done, but it was not within the realms of the possible now. Clifton Dane, Bernard Glyn, and Reilly were lounging at the door of the School House. They stared at the clouded faces of Tom Merry & Co.

"Anything wrong?" asked Glyn.

"Oh, no!"

"Faith, and ye look specially cheerful, if everything's right!" remarked Reilly. "Have you sat on yer Sunday topper, Gussy?"

"Weally, Weilly——"

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Tom Merry; while the others grunted with annoyance. "You know we were hunting that cad Lumley up and down this afternoon, because he had driven off with Cousin Ethel. Well, Ethel's made us promise not to punish him. You know how a girl is—always tender-hearted, and not wanting even a beast like Lumley to be hurt? We've given our word."

"Rotten!" said Dane.

"Beastly!" agreed Glyn.

"Faith, and ye're done in, then!" said Reilly thoughtfully. "Have ye all promised not to touch the spalpeen?"

"That's it," said Figgins gloomily.

Reilly grinned.

"Then ye're all barred. But——"

"But what?" asked Tom Merry, struck by the expression upon the Irish junior's face. "We can't get out of it."

"No, but——" Reilly chuckled. "Sure, and the spalpeen ought to be punished."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And, sure, I'm the boy to do it," said Reilly. "I haven't promised anybody anythin', and I'm going to do it."

The chums stared at him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Trust a blessed Irishman to find a way out of a difficulty! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't know whether our promise allows that," debated Tom Merry. "We said we wouldn't touch him."

"That's all right," said Blake. "We didn't say Reilly wouldn't touch him. Reilly's name wasn't mentioned."

"But Ethel meant that he wasn't to be punished for what he did——"

"Reilly's a free agent—we're not going to give him orders," Manners remarked.

"Faith, and ye're right. Besides, sure, I'm not going to punish him for what he did," said Reilly solemnly; "I'm goin' to fight the bounder because I don't like the way he does his front hair, begorra!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, here he is!" exclaimed Digby.

The Outsider of St. Jim's came down the passage. There was a gloomy look upon his face, too. Perhaps he was not wholly satisfied with the ending of the afternoon's adventure, and was realising his blunder.

"Faith, and I want to speak to yez, Lumley."

Lumley looked up.

He scowled at the sight of the chums of St. Jim's.

"Oh, it's you!" he exclaimed. "A ragging, I suppose? Well, you're a dozen to one, and I guess you can do as you please. I'm ready."

"We're not going to rag you," said Jack Blake. "We promised Cousin Ethel not."

"I guess I don't care. I'm not asking to be let off. You may begin as soon as you like," said Lumley, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"We shall not begin."

"Wathah not!"

"Faith, and it's me ye've got to deal with!" exclaimed Reilly. "I don't like the way ye do yer front hair, me jewel, and ye're going to fight me for it!"

"You dummy——"

Smack!

Reilly's open hand smote the Outsider of St. Jim's full upon the cheek, and he staggered. The next moment he sprang fiercely upon the Irish junior.

Kangaroo ran between.

"Not here!" he exclaimed. "We don't want all the prefects in the School House on the scene. Come to the gym."

"I don't care where I come," said Lumley, between his teeth, "only be quick—that's all!"

The juniors made their way to the gym. in a body. They did not enter it. In a quiet spot, lighted by the blaze from one of the gym. windows, they stopped, and there they formed a ring, and Lumley and Reilly took their jackets off.

The Outsider rolled up his sleeves, with a bitter smile upon his face.

"So you're all keeping off the grass!" he said. "Don't you feel inclined to wade in, Figgins?"

Figgins gritted his teeth.

"Yes, I do," he said, "but I've promised Cousin Ethel."

"What a convenient promise!" sneered Lumley.

Figgins went crimson.

"Do you think I'm afraid of you, you worm?" he exclaimed.

Jerrold Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"It is usually a coward who hides himself behind a girl or a promise," he replied, with a curling lip.

Figgins made a movement towards the Outsider, but Kerr caught him by the arm and pulled him back.

"Don't be an ass, Figgy," muttered the cool Scottish junior. "Can't you see his game? He'd give anything to make you break your promise to Cousin Ethel. That's what he wants."

Figgins breathed hard through his nose.

"It's all right, Kerr, old man; I won't touch him."

"Are ye ready, Lumley?" asked Reilly.

"I guess so."

And they began.

The Outsider put up a good fight—for him—but he was not the match of the hardy, high-spirited Irish junior. Reilly received many a hard knock without flinching, but he gave back many more than he received.

There was no danger of the Outsider refusing to take his punishment. He stood up to Reilly till he could stand no longer.

But that time came at last, and after the fifth round Lumley-Lumley lay on his back, too dazed and exhausted to rise.

He refused any helping hand with his usual snarl, and they left him. Tom Merry & Co. had kept their promise to Cousin Ethel, but the Outsider of St. Jim's had not escaped punishment.

But as the Outsider sat alone in his study afterwards, with dizzy brain and aching head, it was not his bruises, his aches, that troubled him most—for he was thinking of the chance he had had that day of gaining the regard of Cousin Ethel—the chance he had had of winning her respect—and how he had, with the caddishness that seemed inherent in his nature, thrown that chance away. The girl had been growing to trust him, and he had lost her trust. The chance was gone! Would it ever recur?

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Lumley-Lumley next Thursday, entitled "The Mystery of the Mill," by Martin Clifford. Please order your copy of "The Gem" Library in advance.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 128.

Splendid New Nature-Story Feature.

A SLIPPERY CUSTOMER.

By F. ST. MARS.

HE slept upside down, and he did it for twenty hours out of the twenty-four in five months out of the year, and for twenty-four out of twenty-four as a general rule during the other seven months. Moreover, as if that was not enough, he flew—yea, he flew, though he was a mammal, which is what you call an animal—and he flew with wings that had no feathers. His voice was a squeak of such high pitch that few human ears were tuned to hear it, and his length was three inches and one quarter, and his wing-span exactly fourteen inches and one eighth. In other words he was a bat, the largest English bat, and his official name was Noctule.

He dropped from the hole under the thatched roof of the barn, and shot upwards again into the night with a speed that was amazing. Then he began to perambulate the sky at a terrific rate, flying straight. Suddenly came a hum—a droning hum like that of a motor very, very far away, and a cockchafer, which is a pinchafer, passed going like the wind. The bat shot round on a slant, and gave chase. No eye could follow the evolutions of that hunt. It was just a mazy flicker that made the eyes ache, but at the end the bat swung round on his course with the beetle in his mouth.

For perhaps a second he shut his wings and fell a foot, recovering again instantaneously. This he did four times in all, all the while keeping on his course, much as you will see a tumbler pigeon do, only much more wonderfully.

As a matter of fact, that beetle was by no means dead, and he was trying to wriggle round in the bat's mouth and get a hold somewhere with his powerful jaws, and the bat was shifting him straight again by shutting his wings and adjusting that beetle with the clawlike hooks on the joints of his wings. Finally the bat's little teeth, each sharp as a lancet, came together—snap! And that was the end of the beetle.

Thirteen beetles in all he caught in this manner through the moonlit haze of the early summer night. Beneath, the trees of the wood spread billowing like a black—or silver where the moon touched the leaves—sea, and the air was heavy and stagnant as it is before thunder.

An owl hooted somewhere below in the woods, and a fellow owl answered away in the distance. Crickets filled the intervals, a frog croaked, and a nightjar—which is a goatsucker—"churred" like a fisherman's reel at work.

There were also other bats, bats of all kinds; the little Long-eared bat, whose ears are as long as his body, which is barely two inches; the Pipistrelle, who hunts all night, has short ears like a mouse, and is only half an inch longer than the last; and the Serotine bat, who is nearly as big as the Noctule, and who flies a slow, heavy, flapping flight near the ground.

Suddenly, a strange thing happened. It was as if a fairy had waved a wand and struck every living thing into invisibility. The bats—Long-eared, Pipistrelle, Serotine, and all—had vanished like smoke. They were one minute, and then—they were not. And not only they but all else; goatsucker, field mice, rabbits, rats—all had danced into nowhere.

Now, when the wild folk vanish in that fashion you may bet any money you please that death is not very far away, and so it was in this case. Quite soundlessly across a clearing in the wood there flitted a large brown shape. It was like the coming of a tiny ghost, an uncanny thing with big, yellow, round eyes and flapping wings which made no sound at all.

The Noctule bat saw it, but—saw it too late. Moreover, it saw him.

It was a long-eared owl, and the same are the very same thing as death to bats, rats, mice, and many other of the wood folk.

Like a flash of forked lightning the bat darted down to the trees, and the soft "hur-hurr" of the owl's wings behind him told what he might expect.

They came down together from a height to the forest trees, the owl following every twist and turn of her intended victim so closely that she almost appeared to have been fastened to him by string. But she wasn't. It was her own marvellous power of flight.

For a few seconds that bat had what one might call an anxious time. He wanted his life badly; had plenty to do with it. He did not mean to be switched off by any old owl without having a run for it. If only he could reach the trees! That was the key to the problem. If only he could reach those trees he had a trick up his wing that would make any mere feathered flyer sing small.

And he did reach those trees—reached them with so little to spare that the owl's beak was snapping within four-fifths of an inch of his tail.

Now, under the boughs it was as pitch dark as a closed cellar. The twigs, leaves, boughs, and tree-trunks formed a bewildering labyrinth, and both bat and owl were doing their thirty miles an hour good. The result was startling. One would expect it to be.

The bat went on. In spite of his fourteen inches of wing-spread he continued to go, dropping only his speed to about twenty miles an hour. He ducked, he dodged, he doubled and darted and dived, he turned, he twisted, slid, skidded, skated round corners on one wing, as it were, and, in short, did every amazing sort of wing play you could imagine.

He ought to have been dashed to pieces not once but a hundred times, of course, but he was not. Instead, he kept on, and continued to keep on through quite an acre of the black tangle, till he came out into another clearing and serenely flew away.

Now, if you do not know bats—and they are common enough in summer for all to watch, even in cities—you will scarcely believe this miracle. It is true, nevertheless. The bat, you see, has the most marvellous sense of touch running throughout all the nerves which thread his wings like the lines of a spider's web. So wonderful is this sense of touch that he is able to avoid collision with any obstacle even when he cannot see it.

As for the owl, she stopped. Oh yes, she stopped—dead. I mean really dead. Besides being larger, her wings had no wonderful mechanism which would tell her where things were without seeing them, and even an owl cannot stop from thirty miles an hour to dead nothing in half a yard. She smote a branch in trying to turn off at the last moment, and the branch broke her neck, and the rest was a fluttering heap on the ground, which very soon lay still.

We find the bat—our Noctule bat—an hour later flying high across the sky on his way home to bed. He was not one of those bats which fly all night long, you see. In fact, very few do. Very soon he came to the old barn, slanted down, shot under the thatch, closed his wings, and with the impetus thus attained flashed up like a bullet through the narrow hole in the thatch, and into the granary under the roof, and opening his wings again inside, caught himself, as it were, before he fell to the floor. Then he went straight and silently to the wall and "hung up" under the roof. The "hanging up" process consisted of hanging suspended and upside down by one of his hind claws, his wings wrapped round him to keep him warm. He was not alone here; several of his companions had arrived before him. Had it been light you might have found them hung up also, in likely and out-of-the-way spots between the roof and the wall. They noted his coming, though they made no movement.

But other eyes besides those of the Noctules had watched the coming of our friend. In spite of the speed of his flight, and the noiselessness of it, and the darkness, two round eyes on a rafter turned and watched him settle himself. Then they set out to stalk him.

The stalker was a cat—a young cat. It must have known very little, that cat. Anyway, it stalked, inch by inch, nearer and nearer. Then, with that suddenness peculiar to cats, it made its spring.

In a second it had the bat under its paw. In a second second it had the bat in its mouth. In a third second it—well, dropped the bat and ran away sneezing. And the bat, being only slightly scratched, though horribly frightened, got up and flew to a safer hanging up place. That is the worst of being a cat; they are so dainty and faddy about smells. On the other hand that is the best of being a Noctule bat, they smell like—like—well, look here, a motor-'bus smells like new-mown hay in comparison to a Noctule bat.

(Another of these wonderful little stories next Thursday. Readers may be interested to know that a splendid, long, complete tale of life and adventure in the British Navy, by F. St. Mars, appears in "The Empire Library." Now on sale. Price One Halfpenny.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 138.

You can Start Reading this Story now.

IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING

A Thrilling Old Time Sea Story

By Lieutenant Lefevre.

Read this First.

Oswald Yorke, one-time knight of the road, joins the Navy as a midshipman under the name of John Smith. His first ship, the frigate Catapult, is wrecked under peculiar circumstances, and Oswald is one of the few survivors. His next ship, the Fireball, is despatched to the Isle of San Andrade to investigate the conduct of a certain family of planters named Wilson, who are suspected of complicity with the notorious pirate Kester. Scouting round the house in the dark, Oswald gathers clear evidence of the planters' guilt, but is captured and hastily thrust into a dark cupboard. His men enter later, but their suspicions are disarmed by the Wilsons, and they leave again. Norah Wilson manages to prevent her Cousin Joseph from murdering Oswald at once, but the departure of the frigate from the island early the next morning leaves Norah with little hope for Oswald's life, as the ruffianly Joseph is determined to kill him.

(Now go on with the story.)

Norah's Ideal!

Norah remembered the scene on the verandah that day—Joseph sprawling at full length on the ground, and Oswald, with clenched fists, standing over him. It would be useless to appeal to Joseph Wilson.

There was only one other—Jake, the negro—Jake, who was in the elder Wilson's confidence, who was his sworn servant, body and soul, who would murder her herself if her uncle commanded it, without hesitation and without pity.

To none of the three men who held Oswald's life in their hands could she appeal. There was no one else. The other negroes were in hiding in the plantations and woods. It might be hours before she could find them, and even then she knew that there was not one of them that she could trust; not one who would aid her against her uncle, whom they all hated, but feared with terror born of long suffering and brutal usage.

But she must do something, and soon. The sun was riding higher and higher in the heavens. Presently the men would awaken, and then——

She shuddered and clasped her hands together; then stole back to the cupboard, and listened for a moment.

"Oh, if only I had the strength!" she muttered. "Only the strength to force open this door!"

She glanced round the room with feverish eagerness, and her eyes fell on a knife lying on the floor.

It had probably belonged to one of the pirates, and had been left behind in the hurry of the flight.

She ran towards it, and picked it up; then, returning to the door, thrust the stout steel blade in the crevice, and tried to prise the door open.

The door might have been of solid steel for all the effect that her strength had against it.

At the third attempt the knife broke off sharp, and fell to the floor with a ringing sound that struck a cold terror to her heart.

"What can I do?" she whispered, wringing her hands.

"It is no good, Norah. God bless you for trying to help me, but you can't, dear," Oswald whispered. "I must wait until they come."

"But they will kill you! I know they will kill you! Don't you understand what it means to them? If you escape their lives and liberty are not safe. They dare not risk letting you live. What can I do?"

"Nothing," he answered calmly. "You have done all that you can. You have done more for me than anyone else on earth could."

"If I could only get the key!" she muttered.

The key!

"Where is the key? Perhaps my uncle has it!" She pressed her hands to her head for a moment, and thought.

"Yes; my uncle must have it."

It is the last chance, and she takes it.

"I shall be back soon; I am not deserting you," she whispered.

Then, crossing over to the long sideboard at the end of the room, she poured herself out a glass of water, and drank it.

Then on tiptoe she crept out of the room as noiselessly as a shadow.

No one was stirring in the house. A short flight of rudely-constructed stairs led up to the first floor, where her uncle's bed-room was situated.

Despite her caution, the stairs creaked loudly under her light weight, and each sound went through her heart like a knife-stab.

The door of her uncle's room was closed—locked, perhaps, she thought, with a thrill of horror. But no; it opened as she gently lifted the latch.

Her heart was beating so rapidly as almost to suffocate her as she stole into the room.

She stood for a moment leaning against a wall, for her strength seemed to be deserting her; then, regaining her composure with a violent effort of will, she stole gently towards the bed on which Mr. Wilson lay.

He was sleeping soundly, dressed as she had seen him last. Evidently he had come up to his room and thrown himself down on his bed, and fallen asleep in a few moments.

For some moments she watched him, scarcely daring to breathe; then her hand stole out gently.

There was a buzzing sound in her ears. She was conscious of an almost unconquerable inclination to scream aloud; but she remembered that Oswald's life depended on her, and the thought proved her strength.

There was nothing in the first pocket she felt in. The second contained only a cigar-case and a pocket-book, but no keys.

In another pocket there was some loose money, but still no keys. There was only one pocket left, the right-hand pocket of his coat, and he was partly lying on it. For some moments she stood silently, nerving herself for the ordeal; then suddenly he drew a deep breath, and threw out one arm, almost touching her as she stood beside him.

He was going to awaken! No; he merely turned a little, and lay still once more.

It seemed as if Heaven itself had favoured her, for in turning Mr. Wilson had left the other pocket at her mercy.

Her white hand was in it in a moment. There were keys there—yes, at last keys!

She drew them out, a dozen keys on a bunch, handling them carefully so that they should make no sound.

But the key she sought was not among them. She remembered that the key of the cupboard was rusty. It had been in the cupboard lock for months, as far back as she could remember, and all these keys were bright from constant friction in their owner's pocket.

A feeling of despair came over her. In spite of all, she had not succeeded. There was no other key in the pocket—nothing else.

She returned the bunch gently, and then commenced a search of the room, but without success.

And the precious minutes were passing slowly, bringing death nearer and nearer to the prisoner below.

Her uncle had not got the key; she was sure of that. Perhaps Joseph had?

She had lost all timidity now. She was cool and calm—strangely calm, considering the awful issue that rested on the success of her search. Her calmness surprised even herself.

She stole out of the room, and gently closed the door after her, and a few moments later was standing outside her cousin's bed-room door.

He was asleep; she could hear that even out in the passage where she stood. She could hear his loud, heavy breathing. Carefully she pushed open the door, and entered.

Like his father, Joseph was lying on his bed dressed, except for his coat, which he had taken off and flung on to the floor.

A feeling of disgust and aversion overcame her for a moment, as she stood looking at the young man's heavy face, which looked even more repulsive and brutish in sleep than in awakening.

He was lying on his back, with one arm hanging down over the side of the bed, his head thrown back, and his mouth open.

He was sleeping heavily; and she could guess why, for the faint smell of spirits still hung about the room.

She stooped and picked up the coat lying at her feet, and felt quickly in the pockets.

There was nothing in the first, but in the second there were some papers, a knife, and a key.

Yes, a key—the key at last, she was sure. There was the rust on the handle. She looked at it intently for a moment. She was almost certain it was the key that she sought for.

Should she try it, and run no further risks of awakening the sleeper, or should she search further now?

She resolved on the first course, and, slipping back the papers into the coat-pocket, and retaining the possession of the key and knife, she stole out of the room, and closed the door after her.

She was almost dizzy with excitement as she flew down the stairs. Her heart was beating so fast that it seemed almost to suffocate her.

At the door of the saloon she staggered; but, with a last effort of will, she crossed the room, and leaned for a moment against the door of Oswald's prison, panting for breath.

With trembling, unsteady hand she fitted the key into the lock. It fitted—it turned—and the next moment the door was open.

Then for a moment she utterly lost consciousness, and awakened to find herself in Oswald's arms.

He was free, but not safe yet. There was not a moment to lose.

"They are asleep," she whispered. "I stole the key from Joseph's pocket. They may awaken now at any moment. You must go—go!"

In her intense excitement she pushed him towards the door with her outstretched hands.

"And leave you here for them to wreak their fury on?" said Oswald. "No, no; I cannot! I shall stay with you, and protect you against those fiends!"

"They will not harm me. I shall be safe. So long as you are safe they will not dare to harm me, for they will know that you would guess. For pity's sake go! After all I have done and risked for you, you cannot refuse me now."

Her pretty face was pale to the lips, her eyes were full of intense pleading.

"I will go, but I shall come back soon," he said. "Heaven bless you for what you have done!"

He seized her hand, and, raising it to his lips, kissed it passionately.

"You will find several canoes lying on the beach. Take one, and put out to sea. You will be able to see the frigate still. Stay; take this." She thrust Joseph's knife into his hand. "Rip holes in the others, so that they will not be able to follow you. Now go!"

"Yes, I will go," he said. Then suddenly stooped and kissed her on the cheek, and, without another look backwards, he jumped out through the open window, and started running down the hill.

She watched him for some moments, until he was hidden from her sight by the trees; then she returned to the cupboard, closed the door, and turned the key in the lock.

With the key in her hand, she returned once more to the window, and then, exerting all her strength, flung the key far out into the tangled grass.

And now that it was over her strength was failing her fast. A feeling of dizziness came over her. Staggering blindly across the room, she reached the couch, and as she sank down upon it the sunshine suddenly vanished, giving place to darkness.

It was nearly an hour later when Joseph and Jake entered the room.

"Missy still unconscious," said the negro, with a grin. "All de betterer for missy, she not see noting—eh?"

Joseph went to the window and looked out.

"The frigate has gone. There it is in the distance—just a speck."

His eyes were still full of sleep, and he did not notice another speck nearer in shore on the shimmering sea. He had only gone to the window to satisfy himself that the frigate was gone; and he was satisfied.

Jake had gone down on his knees beside the locked door.

"Hallo, you little man-o'-war buccra! How you sleep—eh? You hab plenty pleasant night-rest—eh? Noting to distarb yo'. You hab plenty more rest bimeby—plenty long rest. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold your row!" said Joseph, between his clenched teeth. "You'll wake the girl. It'll be better to let her stop as she is till afterwards."

He went over to the couch, and stood for a moment looking down on Norah's white face, just as, an hour ago, she had stood looking on him as he slept.

"She ain't dead," he muttered, "she's breathing."

He lifted her hand, and when he let go it fell heavily on her side.

"She looks like death, but she's breathing," he muttered. "It's a long time she's been like this. Well, all the better. It'll be time to awaken her when we have settled with her. And then we can tell her he has gone. She'll believe it."

At this moment the door opened, and the elder Wilson came into the room.

"Still unconscious?" he asked, glancing at Norah.

"Yes; and all the better. The frigate's gone. We'll be able to get rid of that hanged little spy without any trouble," replied Joseph

He was feeling in his coat-pocket as he spoke, and a look of astonishment crept into his face.

"I thought I kept that key last night when I locked him in," he muttered. He looked towards his father. "I suppose I gave it back to you."

Mr. Wilson shook his head.

"No; you kept it," he said impatiently. "I have not got it."

He turned out the contents of his pockets one after another, and the key was not there.

"Come, where is it?" he asked impatiently.

"Hang me if I know! I thought I put it in this pocket, but it isn't here."

Joseph went over to the table, and turned out all his pockets on to it. But the key was not among the things.

"What have you done with it? It must be somewhere. Hurry up! We don't want the niggers to be about, or that girl to wake up, before we have finished," said the elder man.

"I can't make it out. I swear I had it, and put it in this pocket. Ah, I remember! I threw my coat off when I laid down. I dare say it has tumbled out on to the floor. I'll go back and look."

Joseph Wilson hurried from the room, while his father went to the sideboard, and poured himself out a stiff glass of brandy.

"You can do the job, Jake," he muttered. "I ain't fit for it this morning; my hand is all shaky. I haven't got the nerve you've got, Jake."

"I got plenty nerve, massa," the negro said, with a grin. "I reckon I fix young massa buccra plenty quick time!" He took a long, villainous-looking knife out from the sash he wore round his waist, and felt the keen edge with his finger. "Don't tink leetle buccra hab much to say when I done wid him!" he said, with a look of satisfaction on his evil-looking face.

"I wish Joseph would be quick—careless brute!" muttered the elder Wilson.

A few minutes later Joseph returned, with a puzzled, suspicious look on his face.

"I can't find that key, or my knife, either," he said. "I can't understand it. You don't think that girl——"

"Pooh! She's unconscious; she isn't shamming. She couldn't sham a white face like that. Of course she has nothing to do with it. It's your own carelessness. You have dropped it somewhere. But we can't wait about here all day. Jake, break the door down!"

It was easy to give the order, but not so easy to obey. The door was proof against even Jake's immense strength for some time; but at last, with the aid of a heavy iron bar, the black succeeded in forcing the door off its hinges.

"Now, then, out with him, and don't give him time to shout out!" muttered Mr. Wilson hastily.

Jake peered into the dark recess, then turned an astonished face towards his master.

"Him not dere! Him gone! De cupboard empty!" he cried.

"Gone! Empty! You are mad!" shouted Mr. Wilson, and sprang towards the cupboard.

But it was true. The place was empty. The prisoner had fled!

For a moment the three men stood looking at one another, speechless with surprise. Then, with a scream of fury, Mr. Wilson sprang to the window, and gazed out over the sea.

"There—there!" he shouted excitedly. "Where is my glass? Jake, look! Do you see nothing? A speck! Look!"

"I see something, fo' suah," said the black. "I swear it am a boat!"

Meanwhile, Joseph had found the glass on the sideboard, and put it to his eyes.

"It's a canoe, and one man in it! It's him, I'll swear!" he cried excitedly. "It's her doing!" he added, with an oath, pointing to the unconscious girl.

"You are mad! How could she? But we can't stop here talking. He must be secured—killed! There is time yet to overtake him!" cried the elder Wilson, almost beside himself with excitement. "If he gets away, we are done! It's a hanging job for all of us! Jake, a hundred pounds if you catch him and sink him!"

Without a moment's hesitation, the three men leaped out through the window, and ran as hard as they could down to the shore.

"I earn dat hundred pounds! I catch him! Him not know how to use paddle like Jake!" cried the negro. "Hab no fear, massa, dat cussed leetle man-o'-war buccra not escape, after all!"

The gigantic negro picked up one of the canoes as though it was a feather-weight, and ran down to the water's edge with it.

But the next moment his assurance vanished.

"Dere's hole in de bottom ob dis canoe so big dat I put my head in!" he shouted.

He flung the useless canoe away, and rushed back to the shore again.

"There's a hole in each one!" cried Joseph, with an oath.

Yes, in each of the canoes huge gashes had been made—not one, but many. It would be the work of hours almost to repair even one of them.

"Can nothing be done?" cried the elder Wilson, in a hoarse voice.

"Noting sep to mend one ob de canoe," said Jake, "and dat take hour or more. Dat debbil white boy, him cut de canoe pretty badly. Him hab a sharp knife, fo' suah!"

There was a look of horrified despair on the elder man's face. He realised to the full what Oswald's escape meant for him. It meant that the moment the boy had told his story, a Government vessel would be sent to the island, and he would be arrested and shipped off to Kingston to take his trial—he and his son—and the result of this trial would, he knew, be death!

Oswald's Intense Loneliness.

When Oswald escaped from the house and ran down to the shore, he felt very much like a coward, to go and leave the girl who had risked so much on his behalf, behind to face her uncle and cousin's fury. Once he stopped in his flight, and even turned to retrace his steps to the house; but then he remembered her intense anxiety that he should go, and, moreover, he knew that by remaining on the island he would not be able to protect her, while his own life would assuredly be forfeited.

And so he went on, and presently found himself on the sand where the canoes lay. There were eight or ten of them, and were principally used by the negroes on Mr. Wilson's estate for fishing.

He selected one, and dragged it down to the water's edge; then, remembering Norah's instructions, returned, and, drawing out the knife she had given him, slashed the hide of the others into strips. Not only did he do this, but he collected all the paddles and put them into his canoe, and then, pushing it off from the shore, sprang in.

He felt no elation at his escape; his thoughts were full of the girl he had left behind him. Besides, his own position was not quite secure. Possibly there might be some other craft at the service of Mr. Wilson, in which he could be pursued; and even if there were not, he had other enemies to fear beside the planter and his son.

And of these other foes, the one to be dreaded most was thirst. He, who had suffered the awful tortures of thirst when cast away in the Catapult's boat, knew the agony of it, and shuddered lest he should be obliged to again go through the same awful experience, and this time alone!

He had neither food nor water, and, beside this, his frail craft was not fashioned to stand the force of a heavy sea. If the sea rose before he was picked up, the canoe would inevitably be swamped.

So although Oswald had escaped from the island, he at present had little enough to congratulate himself upon.

The Fireball was still visible, but only as a speck on the distant horizon; and each moment the speck was growing less and less distinct as the frigate, with all sail set, stood in chase of the now invisible pirates.

It was hopeless to think that he could ever overtake the frigate. His present aim and object must be to get as far from the island as possible and then put his faith and trust in Providence, and pray that he may be seen by some passing vessel.

Favoured by wind and tide, his fragile craft scarcely seemed to need the assistance of the paddle, which he wielded clumsily enough

An hour passed, and objects on the island had become indistinct. He could see the dark mass of the woods, which seemed to rise out of the sea; but he could not see the shore, nor the men who had gathered there, to find their pursuit of him frustrated.

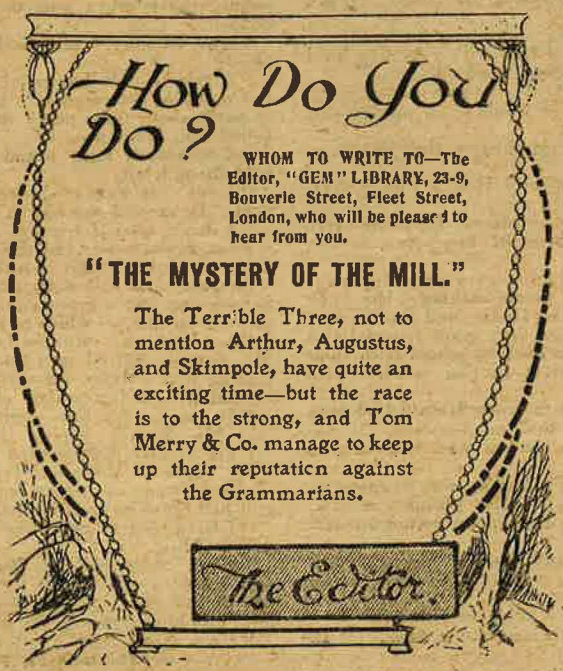
As the sun rose higher and higher in the sky, its heat grew more and more powerful. His head was aching madly from the result of the blow he had received the previous night.

He stood up in the canoe, and gazed intently towards the island.

There was no pursuit, no sign of another boat on the expanse of water that lay between him and the land he had so recently quitted. Then, turning, he gazed seawards, and saw nothing. The top masts of the frigate had sunk from view behind the horizon.

Not another spot nor speck marred the glittering brightness of the sea. Never before in his life had he felt himself so alone as now. Even during the tortures he had suffered in the Catapult's boat he had had companions in misery—he had not been alone!

(This thrilling serial story will be continued in next Thursday's issue of THE GEM LIBRARY.)



NEXT THURSDAY: "THE MYSTERY OF THE MILL"

A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

First Grand Instalment.

BOB REDDING'S SCHOOLDAYS.

A Rousing Tale of School Life.

By HENRY ST. JOHN.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

In which Mr. Squash begins as he means to go on, and makes a peaceful expedition, which ends with a bull and a battle.

"FOIRE—foire! Wake up, will ye? Ye'll be burned in yer beds, all av ye! Wake up!"

It was the first morning of the new term, and Master Peter Hogan, awakened for the first time in his life by the clang of the rising-bell, sprang out of bed in a state of great excitement.

"It's foire, Oi till ye!" he shouted, as he caught his foot under the loose carpet, and went spinning across the room, and alighted with some force on Bob Redding's bed.

It is doubtful if any of the St. Basil's boys had ever been known before to make such good time in getting out of bed.

"Fire! Where's the fire?" demanded Megson.

"Don't smell anything burning," said Courtfield, sniffing the air.

"Who told you there was a fire?" asked Redding.

Hogan, the cause of the excitement, was dashing about the room, hustling on his clothes.

"'Twas the bell—the foire-bell! It woke me up from my slape!" he cried.

"The bell?"

"Idiot!" said Courtfield.

"Ass! Dolt! Pig!" chorused everybody.

Hogan looked round in bewilderment.

"Phwat's the matter?" he asked.

"The matter is that there isn't anything the matter," replied Redding. "That bell isn't a fire-alarm, you donkey! It's the getting-up bell."

"Oi don't think Oi understand."

"I told you it was the getting-up bell—the bell to get up with."

"Phwat is it you want to get up with a bell for?" asked Hogan innocently.

"Because—because—— Oh, go and eat coke! Don't bother me!" said Redding angrily.

Hogan sat on the edge of his bed, scratching his head.

He was a big, loosely-made sort of boy, with a flaming head of red hair, and a flat, good-humoured, freckled face.

He had only come down to St. Basil's the previous evening, and it was not to be expected that he would know much about its ways and customs.

Hogan was only one of the several changes that had come to St. Basil's this term.

"Foulger's House" was "Foulger's House" no longer. That master had left St. Basil's for ever.

There was a new master to take his place. He came early in the afternoon. The doctor brought him over to the House, and introduced him.

Mr. Jopling—for so he was called—was a very big man, with a very soft, low voice, and a gentle manner. He shook hands warmly with every boy in the House, and said he was sure that they were all going to be very good friends, and that he hoped that they had come back to school with their minds made up to apply themselves to their studies with diligence.

In spite of his gentle, persuasive manner, Mr. Jopling soon proved that he meant to put up with no nonsense. It was Megson who put him to the test, and it was Megson who suffered.

It was the evening prep., and Mr. Jopling was sitting with his long legs crossed, and his hands folded placidly in front of him, when suddenly something whizzed by within an inch of his nose.

Then something hit the wall just behind Mr. Jopling's chair, and he got up slowly, and, adjusting his eye-glasses, examined the object carefully.

"A piece of paper, or some similar substance, that has been considerably masticated," he remarked to himself, in an audible tone of voice.

Then he faced round to the class.

"My friends," he said, sweetly and smoothly, "which among you propelled that missile?"

Silence followed, as a matter of course; but Mr. Jopling was not to be daunted.

"My eyesight is not good," he said, "but it rarely deceives me. That small boy, the last but three on the second form, will be kind enough to stand up."

Megson stood up, looking the picture of misery.

"You threw a piece of paper just now, Megson," went on Mr. Jopling sweetly.

Megson mumbled something in an undertone.

"Do you consider it gentlemanly to throw pieces of masticated blotting-paper?" asked Mr. Jopling.

Still no reply from Megson.

"I am afraid," said Mr. Jopling sadly, "that your manners have been somewhat neglected, and it will be my earnest endeavour to improve them. Megson, my friend, you will write out for me: 'It is ungentlemanly to throw masticated blotting-paper at all times, and most especially during hours that should be devoted entirely to study.' You will make a note of that sentence, Megson, if you please; and, as I should like to impress it on your memory, I shall be glad if you will write it out five hundred times, and let me have it after school the day after to-morrow. "I like," said Mr. Jopling, smiling sweetly, "to begin as I propose to go on."

"What did I tell you?" asked Redding that night in bed.

"He's a holy terror!" said Megson. "I was never so disappointed in anyone in all my life!"

"No; he took you a bit by surprise—fairly squashed you—eh?" said Courtfield.

"I think that is rather a good name for him," said Redding thoughtfully. "He does seem to squash you. First he squashes you with his politeness and his long words, and then he gives you an imposition which fairly flattens you out."

And so in this way Mr. Jopling got the name of "Squash," which stuck to him all the time he remained at St. Basil's.

Mr. Squash had a hobby. He was a red-hot entomologist. He had brought a great case with him to St. Basil's, and one day he asked Redding if he would like to come in and see his collection.

The case contained a great number of shallow drawers, and each draw was filled with all sorts and descriptions of butterflies and moths.

"I have heard," said Mr. Squash, "that this part of the country is very rich in lepidoptera."

"Very," said Redding, who hadn't the faintest idea what lepidoptera might be.

Mr. Squash rubbed his hands.

"We will take a little excursion. Let me see. To-morrow will be Wednesday. To-morrow afternoon you and I will go on a little excursion, and you will show me all the best spots you know."

"Of course!" said Redding.

"Possibly one might secure specimens of the smerinthus populi, the bombyx quercus, and the crataegi?" asked Mr. Squash.

"Any amount!" said Redding. "They are all over the place!"

"Goodness only knows what he was driving at!" he said to Courtfield afterwards. "He asked me if there were many leopards about these parts, and he seemed quite pleased when I told him there were lots."

"I wonder if bulls would suit him as well?" said Courtfield thoughtfully.

"I see that Farmer Jackson has stuck up a notice in his field, 'Beware of the bull!'" said Redding.

"I don't mind if I come, too. I've seen that bull. He is a great black beast, and directly he sees anything he rushes at it. I think it ought to suit Squash as well as any leopard."

So early the following afternoon the three set out, Mr. Squash carrying a green gauze butterfly-net in one hand, and a specimen-case, in which to place his captives, in the other.

When they got into the lane that led to Jackson's farm, Mr. Squash started in pursuit of a butterfly, which, after leading him a dance for about a quarter of an hour, at last evaded him, and got safely away.

"It was a very fine specimen of the rare chocolate tip," said Mr. Squash, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "I am greatly disappointed."

Mr. Squash's chase had brought them to the field, and in the excitement the notice-board with the warning about the bull had quite escaped his notice.

"I have seen many of those chocolate drops in this field," said Redding.

"Tips!" corrected Mr. Squash. "But, indeed, have you seen some in this field?" he continued, mounting on to the top of the gate. "Then I must indeed try my luck!" he said, climbing down on the other side.

"I am afraid that it is trespassing!" said Courtfield.

(*Continued on Page iv. of Cover.*)

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BOB REDDING'S SCHOOLDAYS

(Continued from page 28.)

"Nonsense! I shall do no harm," said Mr. Squash. "But if you are at all nervous, you may both wait here."

They took advantage of Mr. Squash's offer, and sat themselves down on the gate to watch and wait.

There was no sign of the bull anywhere, and it was not long before Mr. Squash had started in pursuit of another butterfly that he had disturbed.

They were admiring the way he was prancing along over the ground, making ineffectual grabs with his net at the butterfly, when suddenly, from behind a tree which stood in the centre of the field, something big and black, with four legs and a pair of ugly, white horns, rose.

It was the bull, which had probably been taking a quiet nap in the shade until it had been disturbed by Mr. Squash.

Mr. Squash, intent upon the capture of the butterfly, saw nothing, and dreamed not of danger, and each step he took carried him farther and farther away from the gate.

"Better give him a shout!" said Redding.

"Better hold your row!" said Courtfield. "If you begin yelling now, it will send the bull after him in a twinkling. Let 'em alone!"

For some time the bull stood eyeing the antics of Mr. Squash, with an expression of astonishment on its face.

"I say," whispered Redding, "I believe the beast is going to charge! The moment you see it start, you give a yell. It will distract its attention, and warn Squash at the same time. There he goes, now!"

As he spoke the bull put down its head, and started in a bee-line for Mr. Squash.

"Hi, hi, hi!" screamed the two boys in chorus.

Mr. Squash had just succeeded in catching the butterfly, when his attention was attracted by the shouting. The next moment he saw the cause of the excitement, and he cast a hasty glance round him for some place of safety.

"Run for the tree!" screamed Redding, pointing to the tree which stood in the centre of the field.

It was the only possible place of refuge within easy distance of the spot where Mr. Squash stood, and in a moment he saw that his only hope lay in reaching the tree.

Mr. Squash had long legs, and, fortunately for him, they covered the ground at a good rate. Yet he had nothing to spare, for when he reached the foot of the tree he could hear the thud of the bull's hoofs on the ground, and almost fancied he could feel the animal's hot breath on his back.

The tree was an ancient oak, the lower branches of which were not so high from the ground but that Mr. Squash, who was a tall man, could reach them by making a spring.

He did make a spring. Under the circumstances, it came very naturally to him, and, by great good fortune, he succeeded in catching hold of the branch at the first attempt.

Then, with a supreme effort, he pulled himself up, just as the bull reached the spot where a moment before he had stood.

The bull was annoyed at finding his victim gone, and he showed his annoyance by pawing the ground and lashing his sides with his tail, and filling the air with hoarse bellowings.

"Shoo!" said Mr. Squash, from the tree, trying to intimidate the brute with his butterfly-net. "Shoo!"

The bull did not move. It stood looking up with its wicked little red eyes, and Mr. Squash sat looking down.

"Nasty cow!" said Mr. Squash. "Go away!"

And he jabbed the bull between the eyes with the handle of his net. In order to jab the bull, Mr. Squash was obliged to lean forward a little. It would have been better if he had sat still, for all of a sudden an ominous crack resounded, and the next moment down came the entire branch, and Mr. Squash with it.

How he got there, Mr. Squash did not know, and he could never remember afterwards, but before he had entirely recovered possession of his senses he found himself astride the bull's back, clutching the brute's two horns for dear life. He must have fallen from the tree straight down on to the top of the bull.

However, there he was, and there was the bull, trying to get rid of Mr. Squash.

First it reared up on its hind-legs and pawed the air with its forefeet; then, with a suddenness which took Mr. Squash's breath away, it reversed its position, and waved its hind-legs in the air.

This see-saw business went on for some little time; and then, suddenly coming to the conclusion that it would never get rid of its enemy that way, the bull put its head down between its legs, and tore off across the field at a rate of about fifty miles an hour, Mr. Squash holding on for all he was worth.

"Help!" screamed Mr. Squash. "Help, or I shall die!"

Courtfield and Redding, sitting on the gate, clung to one another in terror at the sight.

"What's to be done?" cried Courtfield.

"Run and fetch Jackson!" replied Redding.

Redding and Courtfield ran all the way to the farmhouse, and found Farmer Jackson cleaning out his pigsties.

"Please—please come at once!" they panted. "There's a gentleman being killed by your bull!"

"Eh? A gentleman what?" asked the farmer, looking up with a scowl. "In my field?"

"Yes."

"What's he a-doing in my field, then?"

"Being killed by your bull!" said Redding.

"All right!" said Mr. Jackson cheerfully. "You'll have to give evidence at the cor'ner's inquest, I suppose."

"Aren't you coming to rescue him?" asked Redding.

"What for? He isn't nothing to me! Besides, he should leave my bull alone. Ain't I gone to the expense of putting up a notice?"

But, in spite of his words, Mr. Jackson slowly pulled himself together, and got out of a pigsty; then he called one of his men, and told him to get a pole and a rope, which were presently brought; and then, very leisurely and comfortably, they sauntered round to the field.

Long before this the bull had run himself to a standstill.

"Why, bust my braces," said Mr. Jackson, "if the feller isn't a-sittin' on him!"

"Help," shouted Mr. Squash feebly—"help!"

Mr. Jackson took the pole, and Jim the rope, and they advanced on the bull cautiously. But he showed no fight—he was too completely done up even to bellow—and Jim just slipped the cord over his head, while Mr. Jackson prodded Mr. Squash in the ribs with the pole.

"Get off, won't you? What do you mean by riding my bull? Do you think I go to the expense of keeping bulls for strangers to ride on?" asked Mr. Jackson angrily.

Mr. Squash slipped down to the ground.

"I presume," he said, "you do not imagine that I was riding that cow for pleasure?"

"Cow? That's a bull! And I ain't a-going to have none of your circus tricks around here, mister, I can tell you!"

"Well, my good man, you ought not to keep such a ferocious animal!"

"Ho! And I s'pose I have got to come and ask you what I am to keep—eh? Oh, yes, Mr. Impertinence, I'll ask you a. Do you know, I have a good mind—a precious good mind—to give you a walloping for riding that there bull!"

Mr. Squash laid his butterfly-net on the ground.

"Indeed!" he said, in a gentle voice of mild surprise.

"Yes," said Jackson. "I've a good mind to knock you into the middle of next week, I have!"

And he clenched his brawny fist, and put it under Mr. Squash's nose.

"I abhor fighting!" said Mr. Squash. "It is fit only for the brute beasts, and ought never to be indulged in by rational beings. To me, there is nothing more disgusting than a display of personal strength. It fills me with aversion and loathing. But, really, unless you take your fist away, Mr.—Mr.—— I do not know your name."

"My name is Jackson, and this field is mine, and that bull is mine, and this fist"—and here Mr. Jackson waggled his fist threateningly—"is mine, too, and I have a precious good mind to give you a taste of what for! See here, don't you ever come into this field again, or——"

"If you threaten me like this," said Mr. Squash, "I shall be forced reluctantly to chastise you!"

Mr. Jackson laughed. His laugh was not unlike the bellowing of his own bull. He was the strong man of the neighbourhood. There wasn't a man in the place who dared to stand up to him, and, in his scorn and contempt, he actually touched Mr. Squash's nose with his fist.

Then, all of a sudden, a transformation seemed to take place. Mr. Squash's loosely-built figure seemed to become more compact. He braced himself up, threw his shoulders back, and then, like a flash of lightning, his left arm darted out straight from the shoulder, and he planted a resounding blow neatly between Mr. Jackson's eyes.

Mr. Jackson was staggered. The blow would have knocked an ordinary man flat, and it very nearly succeeded in taking Mr. Jackson off his legs.

For a moment he seemed dazed, and then, suddenly collecting himself, he uttered a short, hoarse roar, and hurled himself on his adversary.